Numata Center for Buddhist Studies

Hamburg Buddhist Studies 2

Anālayo

The Dawn of Abhidharma



Hamburg University Press

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Series editor: Michael Zimmermann

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Hamburg University Press
Publishing house of the Hamburg State and University Library
Carl von Ossietzky

Imprint

Bibliographic information published by the *Deutsche Nationalbibliothek* (German National Library).
The *Deutsche Nationalbibliothek* lists this publication in the *Deutsche Nationalbibliografie*; detailed bibliographic data are available in the internet at http://dnb.d-nb.de.
The online version is available online for free on the website of Hamburg University Press (open access). The *Deutsche Nationalbibliothek* stores this online publication on its Archive Server. The Archive Server is part of the deposit system for long-term availability of digital publications.
Available open access in the Internet at:
Hamburg University Press – http://hup.sub.uni-hamburg.de
PURL: http://hup.sub.uni-hamburg.de/purl/HamburgUP_HBS02_Analayo
URN: http://nbn-resolving.de/urn/resolver.pl?urn:nbn:de:gbv:18-3-1450
Archive Server of the *Deutsche Nationalbibliothek* – http://dnb.d-nb.de

ISBN 978-3-943423-15-0 (printed version)
ISSN 2190-6769 (printed version)

Printing house: Elbe-Werkstätten GmbH, Hamburg, Germany
http://www.elbe-werkstaetten.de/

Cover design: Julia Wrage, Hamburg
Figure: Gandhāra, courtesy Bildagentur für Kunst, Kultur und Geschichte, Berlin. Museum für Asiatische Kunst, Kunstsammlung Süd-, Südost- und Zentralasien, SMB / I 65 (picture: Georg Niedermeiser).

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Foreword

About *Hamburg Buddhist Studies*

Buddhism has enjoyed a prominent place in the study of Asian religious ideas at the University of Hamburg for almost 100 years, ever since the birth of Buddhist Studies in Germany. We are proud that our programme is housed in one of the pioneering academic institutions in Europe at which the study of Buddhism has become a core subject for students focusing on the religious dimensions of South and Central Asia.

With this publication series, the Numata Center for Buddhist Studies at the University of Hamburg aims to honour this long-standing commitment to research and share the results of this tradition with the academic community and the wider public. Today, Buddhist Studies as an academic discipline makes use of a broad variety of approaches and methods. The field covers contemporary issues as much as it delves into the historic aspects of Buddhism. Similarly, the questions shaping the field of Buddhist Studies have broadened. Understanding present-day Buddhist phenomena, and how such phenomena are rooted in a distant past, is not a matter of indulgence. Rather, it has become clear that fostering such an understanding is one of the many crucial obligations of modern multicultural societies in a globalized world.

Buddhism is one of the great human traditions of religious and philosophical thought. The *Hamburg Buddhist Studies* series aims to discuss aspects of the wide variety of Buddhist traditions that will be of interest to scholars and specialists of Buddhism, but it also wants to confront Buddhism's rich heritage with questions whose answers might not be easily deduced by the exclusive use of philological research methods. Such questions require the penetrating insight of scholars who approach Buddhism from a variety of disciplines building upon and yet going beyond the solid study of textual materials. We are convinced that the *Hamburg Buddhist Studies* series will contribute to opening up Buddhist

Studies to those who are not necessarily trained in the classical languages of the Buddhist traditions but want to approach the field with their own disciplinary interests in mind. We very much hope that this series will encourage a wider audience to take interest in the academic study of the Buddhist traditions.

About this Publication

It is my great pleasure to introduce the second volume in the *Hamburg Buddhist Studies* series, a study by Bhikkhu Anālayo, professor at the Asien-Afrika-Institut of the University of Hamburg. This book is a companion to his previous study of the *Genesis of the Bodhisattva Ideal*, published in the same series. In the present book he turns to another important aspect in the development of Buddhist thought: the beginnings of the Abhidharma.

Anālayo shows that the two main modes generally held in academic circles to explain the arising of the Abhidharma – the use of lists (*mātṛkā*) and the question-and-answer format – are formal elements that in themselves are not characteristic of Abhidharma thought. Going beyond the notion that the coming into being of the Abhidharma can be located in such formal aspects, he shows how the attempt to provide a comprehensive map of the teachings gradually led to the arising of new terminology and new ideas. He identifies the notion of the supramundane path as an instance where fully fledged Abhidharma thought manifests in the discourses, namely in the *Mahācattārīsaka-sutta* of the Theravāda tradition, as well as in otherwise unrelated discourses from the Dharmaguptaka and Mūlasarvāstivāda traditions, extant in Chinese translation.

Anālayo concludes that what characterizes the Abhidharma is not the mere use of dry lists and summaries, but rather a mode of thought that has gone further (*abhi-*) than the Dharma taught in the early discourses in general. Such progression emerges out of an attempt to examine meticulously all the constituents of a particular transitory event.

Michael Zimmermann

Introduction

The purpose of wisdom
is disenchantment, dispassion,
and seeing as it really is.[1]

Theme

This book is a companion to my study of *The Genesis of the Bodhisattva Ideal*, in which I explored what the early discourses have to offer regarding the beginnings of the bodhisattva ideal. In *The Dawn of Abhidharma*, I similarly explore another development of comparable significance for Buddhist thought: the emergence of the Abhidharma. In the last chapter and the conclusions to the present study, I attempt to relate these two trajectories that have been of such central influence in the development of Buddhism.

My approach is based on studying selected early discourses, without any pretence at offering a comprehensive coverage of all relevant material. The beginnings of the Abhidharma have of course already been studied by a number of scholars,[2] hence there will be little that is spectacular in the following pages. Yet I hope that what emerges through approaching this topic from the viewpoint of the early discourses will sustain the reader's interest.

My exploration is divided into four chapters. In the first chapter I begin with the notion of communal recitation of the Dharma, *saṅgīti*, in particular taking up the *Saṅgīti-sūtra* as a discourse that exemplifies the creation of summary listings, *mātṛkā*. With the second chapter I turn to the cultivation of wisdom through knowledge of the elements as ex-

[1] MĀ 211 at T I 790c22.

[2] My ignorance of Japanese has prevented me from benefiting from research published in that language.

pounded in the *Bahudhātuka-sūtra*, and then examine the commentarial nature of early Abhidharma works and the significance of the term *abhidharma* itself. The theme of the third chapter is meditative analysis, in particular the analysis of absorption attainment and of the four noble truths, based on a study of relevant sections from the *Anupada-sutta* and the *Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna-sutta*. In the same chapter I also turn to the relationship of the four noble truths to the Buddha's awakening and to the notion that the Buddha had attained omniscience. The path to awakening is then the topic of the fourth chapter, based on a study of the supramundane path described in the *Mahācattārīsaka-sutta*. I continue with the need in the Abhidharma and Mahāyāna traditions for authentication as being the word of the Buddha, and the narrative employed in the Theravāda tradition for this purpose, according to which the Buddha taught the Abhidharma to his mother during a sojourn in the Heaven of the Thirty-three.

By covering topics such as the Buddha's omniscience and his supposed teaching of the Abhidharma in heaven, I intend to bring out that the beginnings of the Abhidharma would not be the product of dry scholasticism alone. As an additional reminder of the multiplicity of influences that would have shaped the emerging Abhidharma, I have interspersed my discussions with various pieces of Buddhist art, in the hope this will keep alive a sense of dimensions of the development under study that can easily be overlooked in an approach that relies solely on textual sources.

Sources

As with my previous study of the bodhisattva ideal, my main source materials are the early discourses in the four main Pāli *Nikāya*s and their parallels.[3] Both studies are somewhat accidental results of my

[3] The editions used and the procedure adopted are the same as described in Anālayo 2010c: 13. In the case of discourse titles, I use Sanskrit to refer to the different versions of a discourse in general, but the Pāli title for the Theravāda version. Translations throughout are my own.

research into the early discourses, in that I did not originally intend to make a contribution to these two topics. Yet, the material that emerged in the course of my studies prompted me to explore these two trajectories of Buddhist thought from the viewpoint of what can be discerned about their beginnings in the textual corpus of the early discourses.

Since the publication of *The Genesis of the Bodhisattva Ideal* in 2010, I have been able to clarify my methodological approach in more detail. My *Comparative Study of the Majjhima-nikāya* in the light of its parallels,[4] published in 2011, shows that according to the evidence we have at our disposal the early discourses are the genuine product of a long period of oral transmission, rather than being material that for the most part is the product of later harmonization and levelling. In a paper published in 2012 I have contrasted this understanding with the propositions made by other scholars.[5] In two papers published in 2013, I have provided evidence for my reasons for considering the *Ekottarika-āgama* collection as having incorporated later material than usually found in the Pāli *Nikāya*s and the other Chinese *Āgama*s, showing that material has been added to this collection in China.[6]

While the canonical Abhidharma texts in their finalized form show clear signs of being school specific, the early stages of development with which I am concerned in this study appear to have left their traces in similar ways in different traditions. Here I think it is opportune to keep in mind that the early discourse collections are not so much the product of a school, but rather the final result of oral transmission over long periods by successive generations of reciters, of whom only the last generations could be considered members of a particular school. Similarly, the beginnings of the development of the Abhidharma seem to go back to an early period before the formation of schools.

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[4] Comparative information for each of the *Majjhima-nikāya* discourses studied in the present book can be found in the respective sections of Anālayo 2011b, which I will not again be referring to each time a discourse from this collection comes up in a footnote to my study.

[5] Anālayo 2012b.

[6] Anālayo 2013c and 2013f.

The evolution of the bodhisattva ideal and the development of Abhidharma thought are of course multifaceted processes that can be studied from a variety of perspectives, beyond what can be found in the early discourses. Far from pretending to give an exhaustive account of the range of factors that led to the emergence of these two aspects of Buddhist thought, my contributions are just meant to present relevant material from the textual corpus of the early discourses, in the hope of thereby providing a point of reference for those who study the same topic based on other material.

By way of example, my approach could be compared to discovering fossils of an archaeopteryx. The fossils found clearly show that there has been a development from reptile to bird, even though the particular animal whose remains have been discovered was of course not the first one to start jumping or gliding from one tree to the next. Comparable to the fossils of an archaeopteryx, some early discourses reflect particular stages in the development of Buddhist thought.

Acknowledgement

I am indebted to Adam Clarke, Lance Cousins, sāmaṇerī Dhammadinnā, Dhatvisvari, Richard Gombrich, Oskar von Hinüber, Petra Kieffer-Pülz, bhikṣu Kongmu, Michael Radich, Lambert Schmithausen, and Monika Zin for commenting on this work in the various stages of its evolution. I would like to dedicate this book in gratitude to Bhikkhu Bodhi for some twenty years ago having made me proceed from the Abhidharma studies I was doing then to studying the early discourses, which since then has become my main area of interest.

1 Reciting the Dharma and the Functions of Lists

In this chapter I explore the oral dimension of the transmission of the Dharma. I do so by studying the undertaking of communal recitation,[1] *saṅgīti*, in its relationship to the Abhidharma. I begin with a survey of the different Vinaya accounts of what was believed to have been recited at the first *saṅgīti* held according to tradition at Rājagṛha. This then leads me to the topic of the *mātṛkā*s, succinct lists or summaries of the teachings. Among the early discourses, a prominent instance of such a summary list of the teachings is the *Saṅgīti-sūtra*.

After surveying the *Saṅgīti-sūtra* and other similar discourses, I take up a succinct list found repeatedly in Buddhist texts: the "seven sets", comprising thirty-seven qualities or practices that are conducive to awakening (*bodhipākṣikā dharmāḥ*). The overall thrust of my exploration in this chapter is to investigate the significance of lists as aspects of oral transmission and to explore how certain lists relate to the formation of the Abhidharma.

1.1 The First *Saṅgīti* at Rājagṛha

In the ancient Indian setting, access to the Dharma, its study, and its transmission were based on oral means. This makes the recital of the Dharma an activity whose importance can hardly be overestimated. The performance of communal recitation, *saṅgīti*, was and still is a regular feature of Buddhist monastic communities, which are to assemble every fortnight for the recitation of the code of rules, the *prātimokṣa*.

Besides its legal purposes, such *prātimokṣa* recital functions as an expression of communal concord and harmony, which at the same time

[1] With the expression "communal recitation" I follow the formulation used by Gombrich 1990: 25 and Cousins 1991: 27; on the term *saṅgīti* cf. also Tilakaratne 2000b and Skilling 2009: 55–60.

serves to strengthen a sense of identity in contrast with those who are not part of the community. The recitation of the *prātimokṣa* in a united community stands in direct contrast to a schism, as a result of which the *prātimokṣa* will no longer be recited together by those who earlier formed a single community.[2]

A characteristic feature of the recital of the *prātimokṣa* is that those who participate in its oral performance are expected to be familiar with the text. Thus the oral performance of such a recital is based on a text whose wording is necessarily fixed.[3] The function of having a fixed text whose oral performance reaffirms harmony within the community is not confined to the rules of the Vinaya, but can similarly concern aspects of the teaching, the Dharma.

The recitation of the Vinaya and the Dharma in the form of a *saṅgīti* held according to tradition at Rājagṛha soon after the Buddha's demise marks an event to which members of different Buddhist schools looked back as having established their own collection of canonical texts as authentic.[4] The accounts of the first *saṅgīti* at Rājagṛha in different Vinayas vary in their description of what was recited at that time. Most importantly for my present purpose, they differ on whether the Abhidharma was part of the first *saṅgīti* or not.

The Mahāsāṅghika Vinaya reports that Ānanda first recited the four *Āgama*s and the *Kṣudraka-piṭaka*,[5] after which Upāli recited the *Vinaya-piṭaka*.[6] The presentation in the Mahīśāsaka Vinaya is similar, with the

[2] Bechert 1961/1982: 65; cf. also Tieken 2000.

[3] Allon 1997: 42 points out that "communal or group recitation or performance requires fixed wording."

[4] The notion of the Buddhist canon in general and the Pāli canon in particular has been discussed by a range of scholars; cf., e.g., Winternitz 1920/1968: 1–288, Renou 1953/2001: 327–351, Warder 1961b, Webb 1975, Dhirasekera 1977, Bechert 1979/1993: 66–79, Lancaster 1979, Bond 1982, Norman 1983, Ray 1985, Gómez 1987/2005, Hirakawa 1987, Lancaster 1987, Collins 1990, Hazra 1994, von Hinüber 1996/1997, Oberlies 2000, Freiberger 2004, Harrison 2004, Freiberger 2011, Kleine 2011, and Salomon 2011.

[5] On the *Kṣudraka-piṭaka* and the *Khuddaka-nikāya* cf. Lamotte 1956 and 1957.

[6] T 1425 at T XXII 491c16.

difference that here the recitation of the Vinaya by Upāli comes first,[7] a placing also found in other canonical accounts of the first *saṅgīti*. The Theravāda Vinaya reports that once Upāli had recited the twofold Vinaya – the texts that combine the *prātimokṣa* for monks and for nuns with background narrations and explanations – Ānanda recited the five *Nikāya*s.[8] None of these three Vinayas mentions the Abhidharma as a collection in its own right in their account of the first *saṅgīti*. Elsewhere, however, the Mahāsāṅghika Vinaya has numerous references to the term *abhidharma*, an expression that in this Vinaya stands for the nine *aṅga*s of texts,[9] and thus not for a collection apart from the discourses.

A reference to the Abhidharma can also be found in the Mahīśāsaka Vinaya. The relevant passage speaks of the ability to recite the discourses and well understand the Abhidharma.[10] Unlike the usage in the Mahāsāṅghika Vinaya, here the term Abhidharma does stand for something apart from the discourses.

The same holds for the Theravāda Vinaya, which speaks of the Abhidharma as something to be learned in addition to the discourses, the stanzas (*gāthā*), and the Vinaya.[11] Another reference mentions the

[7] T 1421 at T XXII 190c29 reports Upāli's recitation of the Vinaya, followed by Ānanda's recitation of the discourses, which were collected in the form of the four *Āgama*s and the *Kṣudraka-piṭaka*.

[8] Vin II 287,8, following the reading *ubhatovinaye* in the E[e] and S[e] editions, instead of *ubhatovibhaṅge* found in B[e] and C[e].

[9] T 1425 at T XXII 536b21: "the nine divisions of discourses are the Abhidharma", 阿毘曇者, 九部修多羅. A similar presentation can be found in the Mahāsāṅghika Lokottaravāda *Bhikṣuṇī Vinaya*, Roth 1970: 248,17 (§218): *abhidharmo nāma navavidhaḥ sūtrāntaḥ*; with the nine then spelled out in the Mahāsāṅghika Lokottaravāda *Abhisamācārikā Dharmāḥ*, Karashima and von Hinüber 2012: 63,10 (§7.5): *abhidharmmo nāma navavidho sūtrānto sūtraṃ geyaṃ vyākaraṇaṃ gāthā udānaṃ itivṛttakaṃ jātakaṃ vaipulyâdbhutādharmmā*; cf. also Hirakawa 1980: 173f and Sung 1999: 174. The list of nine *aṅga*s appears to be an earlier version of what in some traditions became twelve *aṅga*s; cf., e.g., Kalupahana 1965: 616, von Hinüber 1994a: 122, and Nattier 2004: 168.

[10] T 1421 at T XXII 132b12+16.

[11] Vin IV 144,4; Horner 1942/1983: xii points out that here "the very presence of the word *gāthā* is enough to preclude the term *abhidhamma* from standing for the literary

Abhidharma as a topic of discussion, besides the discourses and the Vinaya.[12] These references occur in a word commentary on the rules, in a text that is basically an ancient commentary that has become canonical.[13] A report of the first *saṅgīti* in the commentary on the *Dīgha-nikāya*, the *Sumaṅgalavilāsinī*, then explicitly reports that the Abhidharma was recited by the five hundred arhats who were held to have been present on this occasion.[14]

Thus whereas the accounts of the first *saṅgīti* in these Vinayas seem to have been finalized at a time when the Abhidharma had not yet become a collection in its own right, other passages in the same Vinayas not only show evidence of the usage of the term, but at times even seem to imply awareness of the existence of such a collection.

Such awareness can also be seen in the case of the Dharmaguptaka Vinaya account of the first *saṅgīti*. The Dharmaguptaka Vinaya reports that, after the *Vinaya-piṭaka* had been compiled and the discourses had been collected in the four *Āgama*s and in the *Kṣudraka-piṭaka*, other

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exegesis of that name, for no reference to the third Piṭaka as such would have combined a reference to part of the material, verses, which one of the Piṭakas finally came to include"; according to Oldenberg 1879/1997: xii note 2, however, the references to *gāthā* and to Abhidharma intend different parts of the *Khuddaka-nikāya*.

[12] Vin IV 344,19, which according to Oldenberg 1879/1997: xii note 2, "we can unhesitatingly assume to be an interpolation."

[13] As noted by von Hinüber 1996/1997: 64, this occurrence is in what is "a late part of the Suttavibhaṅga in the Vinaya". Another occurrence is part of a set of stanzas that conclude the first section of the *Mahāvagga*, Vin I 98,35, indicating that even though the discourses and the Abhidharma may be lost, as long as the Vinaya does not perish the dispensation will prevail. Other references in Vin I 64,28 and 68,14 take the form *abhidhamme vinetuṃ abhivinaye vinetuṃ*. I will discuss this type of occurrence, which combines *abhidharma* with *abhivinaya*, in the next chapter.

[14] After listing the canonical Abhidharma works, Sv I 15,19 continues by indicating that "'this is called the *Abhidharma-piṭaka*', having said this the five hundred arhats performed its recital", *idaṃ abhidhammapiṭakaṃ nāmā ti vatvā pañca arahantasatāni sajjhāyam akaṃsu*. The momentousness of this event is then marked by an earthquake. In this way, as already noted by Müller 1881: xxxiii, "between the time of the *K*ullavagga [i.e., the account of the first *saṅgīti* in the Vinaya] and the time of Buddhaghosa the Abhidhamma must have assumed its recognised position by the side of Vinaya and Sutta."

texts were collected in the *Abhidharma-piṭaka*; in this way the *tripiṭaka* was collected.[15]

Closer inspection brings to light a problem with this description. Once the *Abhidharma-piṭaka* is mentioned as a *piṭaka* alongside the *Vinaya-piṭaka* and the *Kṣudraka-piṭaka*,[16] the *tripiṭaka* would correspond to these three. The four *Āgama*s are thus left without a proper placing in this *tripiṭaka*. This suggests that the reference to the *Abhidharma-piṭaka* as the final step in the compilation of the *tripiṭaka* would be a later addition to the account of the first *saṅgīti* in the Dharmaguptaka Vinaya, done without properly adjusting the formulation.

The Sarvāstivāda Vinaya goes further. Its account of the first *saṅgīti* not only mentions the Abhidharma, but even reports that Mahākāśyapa questioned Ānanda about the place where the Buddha had taught the Abhidharma. Ānanda replied that the Buddha taught the Abhidharma at Śrāvastī.[17] The teaching given at that time was that breaches of the five precepts are conducive to rebirth in hell,[18] whereas keeping the five precepts leads to a heavenly rebirth.

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[15] T 1428 at T XXII 968b26: "they collected the *Abhidharma-piṭaka*; thus at that time they collected the *tripiṭaka*", 集為阿毘曇藏, 時即集為三藏. A comparable account can be found in the 毘尼母經 (*Vinaya-mātṛkā*), a Vinaya text perhaps representing the Haimavata tradition (cf. Anālayo 2012c: 450f note 6), which also mentions the collection of an *Abhidharma-piṭaka*, T 1463 at T XXIV 818a29.

[16] T 1428 at T XXII 968b11: 毘尼藏 and 968b26: 雜藏.

[17] T 1435 at T XXIII 449a19: "The elder Mahākāśyapa furthermore asked Ānanda: 'In what place did the Buddha first teach the Abhidharma?' Ānanda replied: 'Thus have I heard, at one time the Buddha was staying at Śrāvastī'", 長老摩訶迦葉復問阿難: 佛何處始說阿毘曇? 阿難答言: 如是我聞, 一時佛在舍婆提. The providing of a location of course serves to authenticate the teaching, something which the Mahāsāṅghika Vinaya and the Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinaya encourage even if the actual location has been forgotten; cf. T 1425 at T XXII 497a6 and T 1451 at T XXIV 328c15 and 575b29, and for the corresponding passage in the Tibetan Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinaya, together with a discussion, Schopen 1997/2004 and 1998/2004: 283 note 59. A similar instruction occurs in the introduction to the *Ekottarika-āgama*, T II 550b13, and in a commentary that appears to have been compiled based on the already completed *Ekottarika-āgama* translation (cf. Mori 1970 and Palumbo 2013: 163–265), T 1507 at T XXV 33b19.

[18] T 1435 at T XXIII 449a22: "because of the five dangers, offenses, animosities, and destructions, after death one will fall into hell, just as quickly as a strong person might

The Sarvāstivāda Vinaya's more detailed account of the recitation of the Abhidharma in this way explicitly records a question-and-answer exchange between Mahākāśyapa and Ānanda, which provides information about the location where the Abhidharma was spoken by the Buddha and what form this teaching had taken. Its presentation of a basic summary of the moral conduct incumbent on any disciple of the Buddha, however, is unexpected as a way of describing the first delivery of Abhidharma teachings by the Buddha. It seems that this passage was formulated at a time when the connotations of the term Abhidharma were still somewhat undetermined.

With the Dharmaguptaka and Sarvāstivāda Vinaya accounts of the first *saṅgīti*, the notion of the Abhidharma as a collection in its own right emerges gradually, from a mere mention in the Dharmaguptaka Vinaya to a report of the Buddha's first preaching of the Abhidharma at a specific location in the Sarvāstivāda Vinaya.

The account of the first *saṅgīti* in the Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinaya does not explicitly mention the Abhidharma, although it reports that on this occasion Mahākāśyapa recited the *mātṛkā*(s).[19] The term *mātṛkā* derives from *mātṛ*, "mother",[20] and conveys the sense of a succinct list or summary which can be expanded and serve as the skeleton for a detailed

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bend or stretch an arm. What are the five? The first is killing, the second is stealing, the third is sexual misconduct, the fourth is false speech, the fifth is drinking liquor", 五怖罪怨滅故 (adopting a variant that adds 滅), 死後, 譬如力士屈伸臂頃, 墮於地獄. 何等五? 一者殺, 二者偷, 三者邪婬, 四者妄語, 五者飲酒. This is followed by indicating that one who abstains from these five will be reborn in heaven. For the same teaching as the first delivery of the Abhidharma cf. also T 1509 at T XXV 69c20. Comparable expositions, though not related in any way to the Abhidharma or the first *saṅgīti*, can be found in AN 5.173 at AN III 204,11 and AN 5.174 at AN III 204,27.

[19] T 1451 at T XXIV 408b6: 摩窒里迦, with its counterpart *ma mo* in D 6 *da* 315b7 or Q 1035 *ne* 298b4. The Sanskrit term *mātṛkā* occurs regularly elsewhere in the Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinaya; cf., e.g., the *Kośambakavastu*, Dutt 1984b: 173,8, the *Śayanāsanavastu*, Gnoli 1978: 3,19 (=Dutt 1984c: 122,4), 44,16, and 71,6, the *Poṣadhavastu*, Dutt 1984d: 97,13, and the *Kaṭhinavastu*, Chang 1957: 58,8; cf. also the *Divyāvadāna*, Cowell and Neil 1886: 18,15 and 333,7.

[20] On the *mātṛkā* as a feminine symbol cf. Crosby 2008: 40, McDaniel 2009, and Ronkin 2014.

exposition. A textual *mātṛkā* is thus comparable to a "mother" in the sense that it can give birth to a full exposition of a particular topic.[21]

In the context of a gradual evolution in the accounts of the first *saṅgīti* from a recitation of Dharma and Vinaya (Mahāsāṅghika, Mahīśāsaka, Theravāda) to a recitation that includes the Abhidharma (Dharmaguptaka, Sarvāstivāda), perhaps the Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinaya reflects an interim stage where what eventually came to be reckoned Abhidharma was referred to as *mātṛkā*.

1.2 *Mātṛkā* and Abhidharma

The *Mahāgopālaka-sutta* of the *Majjhima-nikāya* describes several detrimental qualities of a monk. One of them is that he fails to approach learned monks to improve his own understanding. These learned monks are qualified in the *Mahāgopālaka-sutta* as bearing in mind the Dharma, the Vinaya, and the *mātṛkā*(s).[22]

The corresponding passage in a *Saṃyukta-āgama* parallel, a collection probably transmitted by Mūlasarvāstivāda reciters,[23] similarly depicts a monk who does not approach learned monks. Here it is the monk's own ignorance that is described, which manifests in his lack of knowledge of the discourses, the Vinaya, and the Abhidharma.[24] The basic implication of the two presentations is the same, in that a monk who does

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[21] Cousins 2005b: 20 points to a stage that precedes this type of usage, in that "the word *mātikā* in the sense of 'headings' precedes its use to mean a table of items or lists and only subsequently does it come to be used in the singular with that meaning."

[22] MN 33 at MN I 221,22: *dhammadharā vinayadharā mātikādharā*, preceded by noting that they are also *bahussutā āgatāgamā*, learned and well versed in an/the *Āgama*/s.

[23] On the school affiliation of T 99 cf., e.g., Lü 1963: 242, Waldschmidt 1980: 136, Mayeda 1985: 99, Enomoto 1986: 23, Hirakawa 1987: 513, Schmithausen 1987: 306, Choong 2000: 6 note 18, Hiraoka 2000, Oberlies 2003: 64, and Bucknell 2006: 685; on the provenance of the manuscript used for the translation cf. Glass 2010.

[24] SĀ 1249 at T II 343a10: "he does not know the discourses, the Vinaya, and the Abhidharma", 彼不知修多羅, 毘尼, 阿毘曇; for a translation of SĀ 1249 cf. Anālayo 2010b. Another occurrence of 阿毘曇, found in SĀ 727 at T II 195c29, has *mātṛkā* as its counterpart in the corresponding Sanskrit fragment; cf. Waldschmidt 1967: 245,2.

not know the discourses, etc., should approach learned monks who do know them in an effort to improve his learning.

The fact that the mention of the *mātṛkā*(s) in the *Mahāgopālaka-sutta* has a counterpart in a reference to the "Abhidharma" in the *Saṃyukta-āgama* discourse mirrors the situation in the Vinayas, where the reference to the *mātṛkā* in the Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinaya has as its counterpart the Abhidharma mentioned in the Dharmaguptaka and Sarvāstivāda Vinayas. Similar to the situation in the Vinayas, where the Mahāsāṅghika, Mahīśāsaka, and Theravāda accounts of the first *saṅgīti* do not mention *mātṛkā*s or the Abhidharma, here, too, several parallels to the *Mahāgopālaka-sutta* mention neither *mātṛkā*s nor the Abhidharma.[25]

Now the relationship of *mātṛkā*s to the development of Abhidharma has been highlighted by a number of scholars.[26] Yet, the Pāli commentarial tradition understands the *mātṛkā*s to be related rather to the Vinaya, namely to the two codes of monastic rules, *prātimokṣa*.[27] Since by the

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[25] EĀ 49.1 at T II 794b14 speaks of being knowledgeable in the twelve *aṅga*s and T 1509 at T XXV 74a28 of enquiring about the Dharma. Yet another parallel, T 123 at T I 546a13, does not have a counterpart to this particular quality at all. Notably, the commentary on the present passage in MN 33, Ps II 263,21, describes the case of a foolish monk who asks wrong questions, such as approaching a teacher of Abhidharma to ask about Vinaya matters or else approaching a Vinaya teacher to put questions about Abhidharma topics. This thus brings up both the topics of Abhidharma and Vinaya, although this commentarial description is not a direct gloss on the expression *mātikā-dharā*.

[26] Cf., e.g., Kern 1896: 3, Winternitz 1920/1968: 9 note 1, Przyluski 1926: 334, Horner 1941: 292, Hofinger 1946: 230, Bareau 1951: 8–13, Migot 1952: 524–530, Warder 1961a, Frauwallner 1964: 59f, Ling 1970: 19, Misra 1972: 145, Anacker 1975: 59, Jaini 1977: 45, Bronkhorst 1985: 305, Gómez 1987/2005: 1270, Gethin 1992/1993: 158–162, Cox 1995: 8, Buswell and Jaini 1996: 84–89, Watanabe 1983/1996: 42–45, Gombrich 1990: 25, Hirakawa 1993/1998: 140–142, Norman 1997: 51, Dessein in Willemen et al.1998: 12, Wayman 2000: 607, Dhammajoti 2002/2007: 1, Wickramagamage 2002, Ronkin 2005: 27–30, Shravak 2008: 211, Ming Wei 2010: 202–204, Dessein 2012: 142–145, and Skilling 2013: 155 note 214.

[27] Thus, e.g., Mp II 189,23 glosses the expression *mātikādharā* as referring to *dvemātikā-dharā*. Norman 1983: 96 comments that this commentarial gloss "probably arises from the fact that *mātikā* means 'summary,' and can therefore be used both of a summary of the Pātimokkha rules and of the type of summary of contents which is found … in the majority of the texts of the Abhidhamma-piṭaka." As noted by Cox 1995: 8, in

time of the Pāli commentaries the existence of the *Abhidharma-piṭaka* was a matter of fact, the circumstance that they nevertheless associate the *mātṛkā*s with the Vinaya gives the impression that this association reflects an old tradition,[28] and that the use of *mātṛkā*s also bears an important relation to Vinaya literature.[29]

A rationale for emphasizing the memorization of the *mātṛkā* qua *prātimokṣa* as something that is worth explicit mention could be found in the fortnightly observance which is to be carried out in any monastic dwelling that houses four or more fully ordained monastics. The performance of this observance requires that at least one of the monastics is able to recite the *prātimokṣa*.

In view of this requirement, it would indeed be meaningful to make a specific mention of the fact that someone who had not memorized the Vinaya was nevertheless able to recite its *mātṛkā*, or perhaps even both Vinaya *mātṛkā*s by learning the *prātimokṣa* for *bhikṣu*s and the *prātimokṣa* for *bhikṣuṇī*s. Such an ability would be an important asset for ritual purposes and thus would deserve mention on a par with the ability

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this way "*mātṛkā* would not represent Abhidharma in particular, but rather would refer to a method of exegesis that could be applied to either *dhamma* or *vinaya*."

[28] As pointed out by von Hinüber 1994b: 115, "damit wird *mātikā* also gerade nicht dem *Abhidhamma* zugeordnet, sondern ein Bezug zum *Vinaya* hergestellt. Eigentlich hätte eine Gleichsetzung von *mātikā* mit *Abhidhamma* zur Zeit der Kommentare … durchaus nahegelegen. Dies verleiht der Zuweisung von *mātikā* zum *Vinaya* besonderen Nachdruck: Sie scheint auf einer alten Tradition zu beruhen." Thus, as noted by Norman and Pruitt 2001: xxxviii, it seems that "later usage was borrowed from the *Vinaya* usage where *mātikā* refers to the Pātimokkha in the frequent formula *dhammadhara, vinayadhara, mātikādhara*."

[29] According to an intriguing suggestion made by von Hinüber 1994b: 120f, the *Abhidharma-piṭaka* might have come into being by combining textual material from the *Sūtra-piṭaka* with the methodology of the *Vinaya-piṭaka*. In the words of von Hinüber 1995: 27, "perhaps it is not a coincidence that monks knowledgeable in Abhidharma were particularly apt to decide Vinaya cases, because the way of thinking in both, Buddhist philosophy and law, shows some similarities: the latter may have served as a model for the former in which case the Abhidhamma is based on the application of the methods developed in juridical thinking and on material drawn from the Suttas." For a discussion of Vinaya *mātṛkā*s cf. also Sung 1999 and Clarke 2004.

to expound the Dharma or the Vinaya. If references to those who bear in mind the *mātṛkā*(s) were originally about knowledge of the two *prātimokṣa*s, then this would indeed be a commendable quality of a monk and fit the context of the *Mahāgopālaka-sutta*.

Given the relation of *mātṛkā*s to Vinaya literature, it would follow that, even though the *mātṛkā*s indubitably have played an important role in the formation of Abhidharma texts, the basic function of such summaries and lists is not characteristic of the Abhidharma alone. Such summary lists simply facilitate memorization and teaching as aspects of the oral performance of any text. That is, the employment of *mātṛkā*s is probably best understood as characteristic of oral Buddhist literature in general.[30] Their use is independent of whether the text to be memorized, recited, or taught has features that reflect Abhidharma notions or not.[31]

In an oral culture, the use of lists is something quite natural, as it aids clarity of thought and enables ease of communication.[32] Lists are a recurrent feature and of considerable importance not only in oral traditions, but even in written culture;[33] in fact writing in a way facilitates

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[30] Gethin 1992/1993: 149 explains that "much of the scriptural sutta material preserved in the four primary Nikāyas can be regarded as exposition based around lists of one sort or another … it seems clear that the proliferation of lists in early Buddhist literature has something to do with its being an 'oral literature' … indeed, a penchant for analyzing something in terms of a neat categorized list is characteristic of much of traditional Indian learning."

[31] Collins 1982: 109 notes that "it is not surprising in a predominantly oral culture that a system of thought which depends as highly as does Buddhism on intellectual analyses should come to preserve the content of its doctrine by accurate transmission of categorized lists, easily susceptible to rote-learning." Gethin 1992/1993: 158 comments that, without intending "to deny that a relationship exists between the *mātikā*s and the development of the Abhidhamma, it seems to me that to suggest any simple equivalence of the two terms must be regarded as a misleading simplification."

[32] Ong 1982/1996: 34f explains that in an "oral culture, to solve effectively the problem of retaining and retrieving carefully articulated thought, you have to do your thinking in mnemonic patterns, shaped for ready oral recurrence … in an oral culture, to think through something in non-formulaic, non-patterned, non-mnemonic terms … would be a waste of time, for such thought, once worked through, could never be recovered with any effectiveness."

[33] For a survey of the functions of lists in relation to writing cf. Goody 1977: 74–111.

the drawing up of more complex lists. Although writing has certainly exerted an important influence on Abhidharma literature,[34] the initial stages of development with which I am concerned here still take place within a predominantly oral culture.[35]



Figure 1.1 Siddhārtha Learns Writing

The relief reflects the belief that in his youth the future Buddha learned writing. The right side of the sculpture shows the young Siddhārtha paying respect to his teacher who holds a manuscript in his hand; the left side shows Siddhārtha writing on a board with an assistant holding an inkpot.

Gandhāra, courtesy Staatliches Museum für Völkerkunde München.[36]

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[34] The relevance of this tendency to the formation of the Abhidharma has been highlighted by McMahan 1998/2013: 223, who points out that "the attempt to systematize the teachings of the sūtras into a consistent order came about from the relative freedom from temporal sequence that writing afforded. Abhidharma thought, with its extensive lists, categories, correlations, headings and subheadings, bears the marks of literate composition in that it culls teachings from a number of different sources and attempts to systematize, synthesize, and categorize them. Such activities would be extremely difficult if one were limited to the sequentiality that structures oral recitation of memorized utterances. The simultaneous presence of written texts in visual space is necessary for such work. The multiple categories and subcategories in the Abhidharma and other commentarial literature are, in part, the products of the ability to represent complex classificatory schemas spatially."

[35] On writing in relation to the early Buddhist discourses cf. Anālayo 2009e.

[36] Picture taken by Swantje Autrum-Mulzer.

The use of lists is also not confined to the Buddhist tradition, but would have been known in the Jain tradition as well.[37] The basic pattern of a summary statement that can easily be memorized and then be used as the basis for a more detailed explanation is similarly characteristic for the Brahminical *sūtra*s.[38]

Going beyond India, lists are of course known from other cultures as well. Examples dating as far back in human history as about two millennia before the Common Era are the Sumerian King List, which gives the names of kings and the duration of their reigns,[39] and the Egyptian Execration Texts, which list those considered hostile to the ruler.[40]

Once the general function of lists is appreciated, it becomes fairly clear that the topic-wise division of the *Saṃyukta-āgama/Saṃyutta-nikāya* and the numerical arrangement of the *Ekottarika-āgama/Aṅguttara-nikāya* need not be seen as reflecting Abhidharma influence.[41] Instead, to arrange items by topic or in a numerical ascending order is simply a natural way of organizing orally transmitted texts.

The fact that several topics used for the divisions of the *Saṃyukta-āgama/Saṃyutta-nikāya* collections are prominent in Abhidharma texts – such as the aggregates, the sense-spheres, etc. – simply reflects their importance as central aspects of Buddhist doctrine. Their occurrence does not have to reflect Abhidharma influence.

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[37] The *Uttarajjhayaṇa*, Charpentier 1922: 178,11 (24.1), uses the expression "eight *māyā*s" to introduce a summary of a teaching on the five *samiti*s and the three *gupti*s. Jacobi 1895/1996: 129 note 1 comments on this passage that the term "mâyâ, the Sanskrit form of which may be mâtâ or mâtrâ … denotes that which includes in itself other things … the word may also mean mâtri 'mother'."

[38] Cf. Frauwallner 1971: 104.

[39] Cf. the edition and study by Jacobson 1939.

[40] Specimens were already published by Sethe 1926; cf. also, e.g., Ritner 1993: 136–142.

[41] Pace Bronkhorst 1985: 316, who reasons that "the early existence of some kind of Abhidharma would explain the peculiar shape of the Sūtrapiṭaka, or rather of two sections of it, the *Saṃyuktāgama*/P. *Saṃyutta Nikāya* and the *Ekottarāgama*/P. *Aṅguttara Nikāya*. The former arranges traditional utterances ascribed to the Buddha subject-wise; the latter follows a scheme determined by the number of subdivisions in the items discussed."

An example would be the use of topic-wise divisions for grouping the stanzas of the *Dharmapada*. The fact that stanzas are grouped under the heading of, for example, *citta* or *mārga* need not be seen as a sign of Abhidharma influence, even though the mind (*citta*) and the path (*mārga*) are of course topics of central importance in Abhidharma texts.[42]

A numerical arrangement similar to that of the *Ekottarika-āgama/ Aṅguttara-nikāya* collection can also be seen in the *Parivāra* of the Theravāda Vinaya, where the sixth chapter similarly proceeds from Ones to Elevens.[43] The same principle of numerical arrangement also underlies the Jain *Ṭhāṇaṅga*.[44] Again, such texts do not come under the category of being Abhidharma. Thus Buddhist texts that adopt a topic-wise or numerical arrangement are best reckoned as reflecting an organizing feature commonly used in oral traditions. Such arrangement could be, but certainly does not have to be related to the Abhidharma.

The same holds for the question-and-answer format, which in spite of its formative influence on Abhidharma texts is not in itself a sign of Abhidharma influence. For example, the *Parivāra* of the Theravāda Vinaya also employs questions and answers.[45] Nevertheless, the *Parivāra* is on Vinaya matters and none of its formal features make it an

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[42] These are the headings of chapters 3 and 20 in the Pāli *Dhammapada*, Dhp 33–43 and 273–289, corresponding to chapters 6 and 8 in the Gāndhārī *Dharmapada*, Brough 1962/2001: 133 and 139, chapters 19 and 20 in the Patna *Dharmapada*, Cone 1989: 194 and 198, and chapters 11 and 28 in the Chinese *Dharmapada*s, T 210 at T IV 563a1 and 569a16 as well as T 211 at T IV 584b10 and 597b20.

[43] Vin V 115,1 to 141,8.

[44] This has already been pointed out by Pande 1957: 26 note 44; for an edition of the text cf. Jambūvijaya 1985; for a study of its divisions cf. Krümpelmann 2006. The *Ṭhāṇaṅga* proceeds from Ones to Tens, which may have been the original conception of the *Ekottarika/Aṅguttara* collections as well; cf. in more detail Anālayo 2013f: 37f note 109. Winternitz 1920/1968: 49f note 2 mentions other examples for the adoption of a numerical principle, found in the *Mahābhārata* and in Christian literature.

[45] Vin V 180,1 to 206,25. Norman 1983: 28 explains that "the fifteenth chapter (Upāli-pañcaka) consists of a number of questions put by Upāli to the Buddha about the Vinaya, the answers to which were all in the form of sets of five. It is to be compared with … the section of the Aṅguttara-nikāya entitled Upālivagga, where, however, the Buddha's answers are all in sets of ten"; cf. AN 10.31–43 at AN V 70,3 to 79,3.

Abhidharma text. The same is the case for many discourses, where the question-and-answer format frequently occurs. Even somewhat technical discussions like those reported in the discourses known in the Pāli tradition as the *Mahāvedalla-sutta* and the *Cūḷavedalla-sutta* are not necessarily Abhidharma in content.[46]

A collection of poetic sayings like the *Pārāyana-vagga* of the *Sutta-nipāta* can also employ questions and answers. In the *Pārāyana-vagga*, the term *pucchā*, "question", functions as a header for the different subsections that come after its introductory narration, which clearly marks the catechetical style of the exposition.[47] Yet the stanzas in this collection bear no sign of Abhidharma influence. Moving once again beyond the confines of the Buddhist tradition, any kind of interview from ancient to modern days would have to rely, in one way or another, on the question-and-answer format.

In sum, then, it seems to me that the two main approaches that have been considered as explaining the coming into being of the Abhidharma – the use of *mātṛkā*s and the question-and-answer format – are features that are not in themselves necessarily characteristic of Abhidharma thought, however much they may have contributed to its formulation.[48]

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[46] MN 43 at MN I 292,1 and its parallel MĀ 211 at T I 790b8, as well as MN 44 at MN I 299,1 and its parallels MĀ 210 at T I 788a14 and a quotation in the *Abhidharma-kośopāyikā-ṭīkā*, D 4094 *ju* 6b2 or Q 5595 *tu* 7a7, translated in Anālayo 2012c: 40–55 (for a survey of shorter quotations from both discourses in D 4094 or Q 5595 cf. Anālayo 2011a: 1043f); for a detailed study of *vaidalya* cf. Skilling 2013.

[47] Sn 1032–1123.

[48] Ronkin 2005: 27 sums up previous scholarship as follows: "the prevalent accounts of the historical origin and development of Abhidhamma literature proceed from two explanatory tendencies based on two distinctive characteristics of the genre. According to the first line of thought, there is a close relationship between the evolution of Abhidhamma treatises and an established feature they manifest, namely, the arrangement of major parts of the material around lists of various types … more literally, matrices (*mātikā/mātṛikā*) of doctrinal topics, which offer summaries or condensed shorthand accounts of the Buddha's *Dhamma*"; on which Ronkin 2005: 29 then comments: "I do not deny the relationship between the *mātikā*s and the evolution of the Abhidhamma, but find an oversimplification in equating the two"; in fact, as pointed out by Buswell and Lopez 2014b: 4, the *mātṛkā*s appear to be just "an inevitable by-product of the oral quality of early Buddhist textual transmission." Ronkin 2005: 30

1.3 Summaries of the Dharma

A prominent instance of the use of *mātṛkā*s among the early discourses is the *Saṅgīti-sūtra*, a text that is basically an extended list of various aspects of the teachings. Versions of this discourse are extant as follows, here given according to their school affiliation:

- Dharmaguptaka tradition: a *Dīrgha-āgama* discourse extant in Chinese translation;[49]
- Sarvāstivāda and/or Mūlasarvāstivāda tradition: a *Dīrgha-āgama* discourse preserved in Sanskrit fragments;[50]
- Theravāda tradition: a *Dīgha-nikāya* discourse in Pāli;[51]
- uncertain school affiliation: a discourse translated individually into Chinese.[52]

The parallel versions agree in introducing Śāriputra as the speaker of the discourse, who sets his presentation in contrast with the quarrelling that had reportedly broken out among the Jains after the death of their leader.[53]

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then continues that "another explanation of the origination of the Abhidhamma draws on a rather different feature of the Abhidhamma treatises, namely, their catechetical style … formulated as an exchange of questions and answers."

[49] DĀ 9 at T I 49b26 to 52c11; translated and studied by Behrsing 1930. On the school affiliation of T 1 cf., e.g., Demiéville 1951: 252f, Brough 1962/2001: 50, Lü 1963: 242, Bareau 1966, Waldschmidt 1980: 136, Mayeda 1985: 97, Enomoto 1986: 25, Hirakawa 1987: 513, Schmithausen 1987: 318, Oberlies 2003: 44, Salomon 2007: 354 note 14, and Willemen 2008: 60.

[50] Stache-Rosen 1968. According to the reconstructed order of the Sarvāstivāda/Mūlasarvāstivāda *Dīrgha-āgama* in Hartmann 2004: 125, the *Saṅgīti-sūtra* stands in third position in the collection (preceded by the *Daśottara-sūtra* as the first and the *Arthavistara-sūtra* as the second discourse).

[51] DN 33 at DN III 207,1 to 271,22.

[52] T 12 at T I 226c3 to 233b19; for a more detailed survey of further parallels cf. Anālayo 2013e: 1f note 5.

[53] Quarrels apparently broke out in the Jain community already during the lifetime of Mahāvīra; cf. Deo 1956: 78f and von Glasenapp 1925/1999: 383. According to Jaini 1980: 84, during subsequent periods of Indian history "the divisiveness associated with sectarianism was much more severe among Jainas than among the Buddhists."

The issue of contention was about the correct teachings, about the Dharma and Vinaya taught by the leader of the Jains. The Sanskrit fragment version depicts the quarrelling factions speaking to each other as follows: "You do not know this Dharma and Vinaya, I know this Dharma and Vinaya."[54]

Similar statements can be found in the Theravāda *Dīgha-nikāya* and Dharmaguptaka *Dīrgha-āgama* versions of the *Saṅgīti-sūtra*.[55] The formulation highlights a predicament that must have been acutely felt in an oral setting once a teacher had passed away: how to determine what he taught, if there are no written records? The need to arrive at an oral consensus on what the teacher had taught is precisely what informs the purpose of the *Saṅgīti-sūtra*.

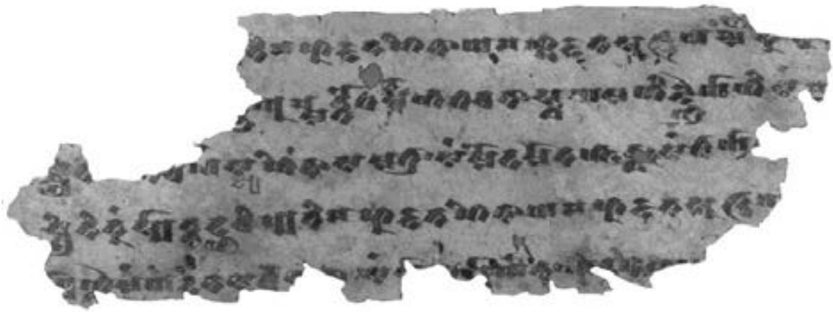


Figure 1.2 *Saṅgīti-sūtra* Fragment

The fragment contains the beginning of the *Saṅgīti-sūtra*.

Sanskrithandschriften aus den Turfanfunden (SHT I 594), courtesy Berlin-Brandenburgische Akademie der Wissenschaften.

54 Stache-Rosen 1968: 44 (§w): *(naitaṃ tvaṃ dharmavinaya)m ājān(āsi), aham etaṃ (dharmavinayam ājānāmi)*.

55 DN 33 at DN III 210,4: "You do not know this Dharma and Vinaya, I know this Dharma and Vinaya", *na tvaṃ imaṃ dhammavinayaṃ ājānāsi, ahaṃ imaṃ dhammavinayaṃ ājānāmi*; DĀ 9 at T I 49c8: "I know this Dharma, you do not know it", 我知此法, 汝不知此.

The fragment of the *Saṅgīti-sūtra* in figure 1.2 above reports that Śāriputra, after mentioning the first item in the list, instructs his listeners as follows: "Here being united, unanimous, and in unison we will not dispute due to uncertainty so that this holy life remains for a long time."[56]

According to the Dharmaguptaka version of the *Saṅgīti-sūtra*, Śāriputra told the assembled monks that, in order to forestall any disputes, "we should collect the Dharma and Vinaya in order to prevent dispute, causing the holy life to remain for a long time."[57]

The Theravāda versions record his words in similar ways: "here we should all recite together, we should not dispute, so that this holy life may endure and remain for a long time."[58] The beneficial effects of such communal recitation are repeated regularly in the body of the *Saṅgīti-sūtra*, continuously reaffirming the theme broached at the outset of the discourse.

The main concern voiced in this way highlights how the performance of communal recitation – *saṅgīti* – functions to foster harmony and avoid dispute about the teachings.

In this way the *Saṅgīti-sūtra* has a function similar to the recital of the *prātimokṣa* for a monastic community. Just as the *prātimokṣa* presents a summary of the essentials of the Vinaya in a form that can be memorized even by those who are not professional reciters, so the *Saṅgīti-sūtra* attempts to provide a summary of essential aspects of the Dharma in a form more easily memorized than a whole collection of

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[56] The relevant text from the fragment SHT I 594 (= Sg 668aV), edited in Stache-Rosen 1968: 19, begins line 3: *[t](aṃ) v(a)yaṃ sahiṃtā samagrāḥ saṃmodamāna bhū[t]vā saṃśāyā(ya)*, and continues at the beginning of line 4: *sthitikaṃ syāt*. Following the reconstruction in Stache-Rosen 1968: 45 (I.1), given without brackets but with corrections and supplementations, this would then read as follows: *taṃ vayaṃ sahiṃtāḥ samagrāḥ saṃmodamānā bhūtvā saṃśāyāya na vivadāmahe, yathedaṃ brahmacaryaṃ cirasthitikaṃ syāt*; cf. also Waldschmidt 1955: 314, SHT IV 412.33 V5 and R1+4, Waldschmidt and Sander 1980: 66f, and SHT IX 2273 Rx, Bechert and Wille 2004: 158.

[57] DĀ 9 at T I 49c18: 宜集法律, 以防諍訟, 使梵行久立.

[58] DN 33 at DN III 211,3: *tattha sabbeh' eva saṅgāyitabbaṃ* (E[e]: *saṃgāyitabbaṃ*) *na vivaditabbaṃ, yathayidaṃ brahmacariyaṃ addhaniyaṃ assa ciraṭṭhitikaṃ*. For a translation of the corresponding section from T 12 cf. Dessein 2012: 132f.

discourses, not to mention all four collections.[59] Both function as an expression of communal harmony.

Adherence to these *mātṛkā*s, which have been publicly affirmed as correct through the *saṅgīti*, is seen as essential for the welfare of the community. In this way the *Saṅgīti-sūtra* takes its main thrust from anticipating a situation that has impacted on the early Buddhist community in various ways, namely the passing away of the Buddha. In order to forestall dispute about the teachings at a time when the teacher will no longer be there to clarify and settle disagreements, the *Saṅgīti-sūtra* sets out its summary of the Dharma.

This function corresponds to what according to the traditional account took place at the first *saṅgīti* at Rājagṛha, where communal recitation – this time of the whole of the Dharma and Vinaya, instead of only the respective *mātṛkā*s – served as a response to the gap left by the death of the teacher.[60] The *Gopakamoggallāna-sutta* and its parallel confirm that the Buddha's role of providing guidance to his disciples was accorded to the Dharma taught by him, once he had passed away.[61]

For the Dharma to fulfil this role, discord about what actually constitutes the Dharma needs of course to be avoided. In the constantly fluctuating piecemeal oral reception of the Dharma by various reciters spread out over different regions of India,[62] the notion of a *saṅgīti* held

[59] Cousins 1983: 3f comments that "the *Saṅgīti-suttanta* of the *Dīgha-nikāya* … can be viewed as a mnemonic summary of the contents of the nikayas."

[60] Similarities between the *Saṅgīti-sūtra* and the first *saṅgīti* held according to tradition at Rājagṛha have recently been discussed by Peoples: 2012: 27–33 and Shravak 2012: 240f.

[61] MN 108 at MN III 9,23 and its parallel MĀ 145 at T I 654b23.

[62] Davidson 1990/1992: 293 depicts the situation as follows: "during the more than forty years of the Buddha's teaching career, there were many monks acting as authoritative teachers of the doctrine throughout the kingdom of Magadha and its border areas. They would cross paths with the master from time to time and receive new information as his doctrine and teaching style developed. They would also receive new information from one another during the fortnightly congregations, the summer rains retreats, and whenever they met as their mendicant paths crossed. After forty years of their obtaining new information through such contact, we may be certain that, by the death of the Buddha, the process of receiving new 'teachings of the teacher' (*śāstuḥ śāsanaṃ*) had become a well-accepted practice. The network of instruction was thus established,

at Rājagṛha establishes a yardstick for deciding what Dharma the recently deceased Buddha had indeed taught. The same notion of a *saṅgīti* informs the *Saṅgīti-sūtra*, with the difference that here concord on the Dharma is established through the recitation of a *mātṛkā* of the teachings.

In fulfilment of this aim, the *Saṅgīti-sūtra* provides an extended list of mostly doctrinal items, arranged in numerical order from Ones to Tens. Although such formal presentation is a typical feature of Abhidharma texts, it needs to be kept in mind that this is simply a convenient manner of arrangement to facilitate ease of oral recall.[63] The formalism of the *Saṅgīti-sūtra* in fact goes only that far, that is, by arranging matters under the numerical grid of Ones, Twos, etc., up to Tens. The number of doctrinal terms allotted to each of the resulting ten subsections of the discourse varies considerably in each category, the Ones and the Tens having much fewer entries than, for example, the Threes and the Fours.

The number of doctrinal terms found in a subsection also tends to vary between the parallel versions of the discourse. This can be seen in the survey below, which lists the number of entries for each numerical category in the four parallel versions, proceeding from left to right listing the Sanskrit fragments of the Sarvāstivāda/Mūlasarvāstivāda *Dīrgha-āgama* (Skt. DĀ), the Theravāda *Dīgha-nikāya* version (DN 33), the version found in the Dharmaguptaka *Dīrgha-āgama* (DĀ 9), and the individual translation (T 12). This survey reflects only part of the differences, since besides variations in the overall count of items, the items found in each section are not necessarily the same. The versions of the *Saṅgīti-sūtra* clearly developed in different ways.

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and doubtless most of the monks realized that much of what the Buddha had said during his lengthy career remained unknown to them personally."

[63] The formal aspect of the presentation in DN 33 (and DN 34) has led Rhys Davids and Rhys Davids 1921: 199 to consider these two discourses as being "practically Abhidhamma rather than Sutta Piṭaka"; cf. also Buswell and Jaini 1996: 83, who propose that "the *Saṅgīti* and *Dasuttara suttantas* … mark the start of Abhidharma literature proper." Yet, as Gethin 1992/1993: 157 explains, "the *Saṅgītisutta*'s method of arrangement appears simply to bring together all lists containing the same number of items, starting with 'ones' and ending with 'tens', and it is hard to see in this much more than a convenient mnemonic device for remembering a large number of lists."

	Skt. DĀ	DN 33	DĀ 9	T 12
Ones:	3	2	2	1
Twos:	27	33	12	1
Threes:	50	60	37	34[64]
Fours:	50	50	36	39
Fives:	24	26	15	14
Sixes:	24	22	14	15
Sevens:	13	14	7	6
Eights:	10	11	4	4
Nines:	2	6	1	1
Tens:	2	6	1	1

A feature found similarly in the parallel versions points to an attempt to facilitate precise oral recall, in that the sequence in which items are placed in these discourses within the subsections from Ones to Tens at times shows the employment of concatenation.[65] The use of concatenation in oral transmission ensures that items to be memorized remain in the proper order. This takes place through the help of some similarity in word form or meaning between a member of the list and what comes next. Such linkage by way of association makes it easier for the mind to connect the item being recited now with the next one and thus facilitates precise recall. Instances of concatenation need not be original to a particular text, but often appear to come into being through rearrangement during the period of oral transmission.

In what follows I survey a few instances of concatenation that are found similarly in the Dharmaguptaka, Sarvāstivāda/Mūlasarvāstivāda, and Theravāda versions of the *Saṅgīti-sūtra*.

[64] It would also be possible to consider the count of Threes in T 12 as amounting to thirty-five items, since the first member in the list, the three types of actions (bodily, verbal, and mental), is further subdivided into wholesome and unwholesome manifestations; cf. T 12 at T I 227c8. From the manner of presentation, however, it seems to me that this should be considered a gloss on what the discourse presents as a single set of Threes.

[65] For a discussion of concatenation in the *prātimokṣa* cf. von Hinüber 1999: 20; on concatenation in the early discourses cf. Allon 2001: 18–22 and Anālayo 2011a: 11–13. Needless to say, the use of concatenation is not confined to the early Buddhist tradition, but is also found, e.g., in the Avesta; cf. Schwartz 2006.

Among the Ones the fact that "*all beings persist* through nutriment" links to the next item in the list, according to which "*all beings persist* through formations."[66] Here the expression "*all beings persist*" provides a link between "nutriment" and "formations".

The Twos continue from the couplet "lack of *shame* and absence of *fear of wrongdoing*" to the couplet "*shame* and *fear of wrongdoing*".[67] Here the association is by way of terminology and meaning, as the first couplet is the opposite of the second couplet.

Similar groupings can be found among the Threes. After the "three *roots* of what is not *wholesome*" come the "three *roots* of what is *wholesome*";[68] the "three kinds of wrong *conduct*" lead to the "three kinds of right *conduct*";[69] and the "three *reappearances* in the sensual realm" are followed by the "three happy *reappearances*".[70]

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[66] DN 33 at DN III 211,22 (1.1 and 1.2): *sabbe sattā āhāraṭṭhitikā, sabbe sattā saṅkhāraṭṭhitikā* (E^e: *saṃkhāraṭṭhitikā*); Stache-Rosen 1968: 45 and 47 (1.1 and 1.2): *(sarva)satvā āhārasth(i)tayaḥ … sarvasatvāḥ saṃskārasthāyinaḥ*; cf. also SHT IV 412.33 R3, Waldschmidt and Sander 1980: 67: *(saṃ)s[k]ā[ras]th(āyinaḥ)*; DĀ 9 at T I 49c20 (1.1 and 1.2): 一切衆生皆仰食存…一切衆生皆由行住 (adopting the variant 住 instead of 往). T 12 at T II 227c1 has only the first of these two, according to which all beings persist through nutriment.

[67] DN 33 at DN III 212,12 (2.4 and 2.5): *ahirikañ ca anottappañ ca*, *hiri* (B^e: *hirī*) *ca ottappañ ca*; Stache-Rosen 1968: 50 (2.4 and 2.5): *āhrīkyam a(na)vatrāpyaṃ ca* and *hrīś ca vyavatrāpyaṃ ca*; cf. also SHT IV 412.33 R5, Waldschmidt and Sander 1980: 67: *(ā)hrī[ky]am-anavatrāpy(aṃ) ca, hrīś-ca vya[vatr]āpyaṃ [ca]*; DĀ 9 at T I 49c25 (2.4 and 2.5): 一無慚, 二無愧 … 一有慚, 二有愧. T 12 does not have these two items.

[68] DN 33 at DN III 214,19 (3.1 and 3.2): *tīṇi akusalamūlāni … tīṇi kusalamūlāni*; Stache-Rosen 1968: 64f (3.3 and 3.4): *trīṇy akuśalamūlāni* and *(trīṇi kuśala)mūlāni*; DĀ 9 at T I 50a8 (3.1 and 3.2): 三不善根 … 三善根. These two are also found in T 12 at T I 227c17.

[69] DN 33 at DN III 214,23 (3.3 and 3.4): *tīṇi duccaritāni … tīṇi sucaritāni*; Stache-Rosen 1968: 63 (3.1 and 3.2): *trīṇi duścaritāni* and *(trīṇi sucaritāni)*; DĀ 9 at T I 50a12 (3.4 and 3.6): 三不善行 … 三善行. T 12 at T I 227c8 (3.1) has these two as a single entry, as it first lists the three types of action (bodily, verbal, and mental), and then adds that these can be further distinguished into wholesome and unwholesome types; cf. also above note 64.

[70] DN 33 at DN III 218,10 (3.40 and 3.41): *tisso kāmūpapattiyo* (E^e: *kāmupapattiyo*) … *tisso sukhūpapattiyo* (E^e: *sukhupapattiyo*); Stache-Rosen 1968: 82f (3.34 and 3.35):

Among the Fours, the "four *yokings*" precede the "four un*yokings*";[71] and among the Sevens the "seven un*true dharma*s" have their counterpart in the "seven *true dharma*s".[72]

Thus alongside considerable variations, the parallel versions agree in employing concatenation in these instances. Even with such occasional aids to ensure maintenance of the proper sequence during oral transmission, however, to memorize the *Saṅgīti-sūtra* as a whole, with all of its items in the correct order, is still a demanding task. This is especially the case for disciples who are not part of the circle of reciters trained in memorizing the collections of the early discourses. So in order to be successful in fulfilling the purpose the discourse itself considers as crucial – facilitating recitation of a summary of the teachings to ensure the absence of strife among the Buddha's disciples – the *Saṅgīti-sūtra* is somewhat unwieldy.

For promoting communal harmony through group recitation, the more disciples know the discourse by heart the better. All those who know the discourse will be able to participate in a group recitation, as active reciters or else as auditors who confirm the recitation through their silent presence or even may correct the reciter in case a mistake occurs.

Judging from the large number of variations found between the parallel versions of the *Saṅgīti-sūtra*,[73] it seems probable that at an early time the actual list was considerably shorter. It would be quite natural for a shorter list to expand during oral transmission by incorporating items

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tisraḥ kāmopapattayaḥ … tisras sukhopapattiyaḥ; DĀ 9 at T I 50b6 (3.27 and 3.28): 三欲生本 … 三樂生. Both sets of Threes are also found in T 12 at T II 228a7.

[71] DN 33 at DN III 230,13 (4.32 and 4.33): *cattāro yogā … cattāro visaṃyogā* (B^e and C^e: *visaññogā*); Stache-Rosen 1968: 116 (4.36 and 4.37) *catvāro yogāḥ … catvāro vi(saṃ)yo(gāḥ)*; cf. also fragment Pelliot bleu 381 Va, Hartmann 1991: 255 (§142); DĀ 9 at T I 51a22 (4.29 and 4.30): 四扼 … 四無扼. T 12 does not have these two items.

[72] DN 33 at DN III 252,7 (7.4 and 7.5): *satta asaddhammā … satta saddhammā*; Stache-Rosen 1968: 179f (7.6 and 7.7): *saptāsaddh(armāḥ) … sa(pta saddharmāḥ)*; DĀ 9 at T I 52a21 (7.1 and 7.2): 七非法 … 七正法. T 12 does not have these two items.

[73] Cf. the comparative surveys in Behrsing 1930: 116–149 and Stache-Rosen 1968: 213–217.

that were considered to be of sufficient importance to merit inclusion in this summary of the teachings. Different transmission lineages of the discourse would have considered different items to be worthy of such inclusion, resulting in the differences found between the parallel versions that have come down to us. In addition, however, it seems also quite possible that at times a loss of text may have occurred, given the somewhat unwieldy nature of the presentation and the fact that, alongside occasional concatenation of the type described above, often items follow each other without any evident connection, apart from belonging to the same numerical category.

The need to facilitate the memorizing of a kind of *mātṛkā* of the teachings has led to another solution in the *Daśottara-sūtra*, a discourse also attributed to Śāriputra. Versions of this discourse are extant as follows, listed according to their school affiliation:

- Dharmaguptaka tradition: a *Dīrgha-āgama* discourse extant in Chinese translation;[74]
- Sarvāstivāda and/or Mūlasarvāstivāda tradition: a *Dīrgha-āgama* discourse preserved in Sanskrit fragments;[75]
- Theravāda tradition: a *Dīgha-nikāya* discourse in Pāli;[76]
- uncertain school affiliation: a discourse translated individually into Chinese.[77]

Unlike the loose list of items in the *Saṅgīti-sūtra*, where the number of entries under a numerical category varies considerably, the *Daśottara-sūtra* consistently has ten items under each numerical category.[78] Moreover, these ten items follow a fixed sequence applied to each numerical

[74] DĀ 10 at T I 52c17 to T I 57b24.

[75] Mittal 1957 and Schlingloff 1962.

[76] DN 34 at DN III 272,1 to DN III 292,7.

[77] T 13 at T I 233b23 to T I 241c19; on further parallels cf. Anālayo 2013e: 2 note 10.

[78] Gethin 1992/1993: 157 explains that "the *Dasuttarasutta* … while also using the principles of numerical association and progression, adapts them to produce a system for placing an entire series of lists (100 to be exact) within a structure that precisely indicates the role each plays in the Dhamma as a whole."

category, from the Ones to the Tens. In the Sanskrit fragment version the sequence proceeds as follows:
1) greatly helpful (*bahukaraḥ*),
2) to be cultivated (*bhāvayitavyaḥ*),
3) to be understood thoroughly (*parijñeyaḥ*),
4) to be abandoned (*prahātavyaḥ*),
5) leading to diminution (*hānabhāgīyaḥ*),
6) leading to distinction (*viśeṣabhāgīyaḥ*),
7) difficult to penetrate (*duṣprativedhaḥ*),
8) to be aroused (*utpādayitavyaḥ*),
9) to be known directly (*abhijñeyaḥ*),
10) to be realized (*sākṣīkartavyaḥ*).[79]

The Dharmaguptaka and Theravāda parallel versions follow the same trajectory.[80] From the perspective of memorization this is a major improvement over the *Saṅgīti-sūtra*. The ten-times-ten pattern makes it easy to notice when a particular item has been forgotten and also makes it more difficult for new items to enter. Moreover, the thematic grid provides a strong structural support for properly remembering textual items. Besides facilitating oral recall, the above grid also invests the list with a strong soteriological thrust, as the themes build up gradually towards realization.

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[79] For the case of the Ones cf. the survey in Mittal 1957: 8f.

[80] For the case of the Ones cf. DN 34 at DN III 272,10: "one thing is greatly helpful, one thing is to be cultivated, one thing is to be understood thoroughly, one thing is to be abandoned, one thing leads to diminution, one thing leads to distinction, one thing is difficult to penetrate, one thing is to be aroused, one thing is to be known directly, one thing is to be realized", *eko … dhammo bahukāro, eko dhammo bhāvetabbo, eko dhammo pariññeyyo, eko dhammo pahātabbo, eko dhammo hānabhāgiyo, eko dhammo visesabhāgiyo, eko dhammo duppaṭivijjho, eko dhammo uppādetabbo, eko dhammo abhiññeyyo, eko dhammo sacchikātabbo*; DĀ 10 at T I 53a2: "one thing is greatly helpful, one thing is to be cultivated, one thing is to be understood, one thing is to be extinguished, one thing [leads to] decline, one thing [leads to] increase, one thing is difficult to comprehend, one thing is to be aroused, one thing is to be known, one thing is to be realized", 一多成法 (adopting a variant that adds 多), 一修法, 一覺法, 一滅法, 一退法, 一增法, 一難解法, 一生法, 一知法, 一證法. For a comparative study of all four versions of the discourse cf. de Jong 1966/1979.

The Sarvāstivāda/Mūlasarvāstivāda *Dīrgha-āgama* contains a discourse belonging to the same genre of summaries of the Dharma which has no parallel in the Theravāda canon or the Dharmaguptaka *Dīrgha-āgama*. This is the *Arthavistara-sūtra*, whose speaker is Śāriputra.[81] Instead of adopting a numerical order in its presentation, like the *Saṅgīti-sūtra* and the *Daśottara-sūtra*, the items in its list proceed thematically, following a trajectory that builds up to the attainment of full liberation and freedom from rebirth.

Together with the *Saṅgīti-sūtra* and the *Daśottara-sūtra*, the *Arthavistara-sūtra* is part of a group of six discourses, the *Ṣaṭsūtraka-nipāta*, found at the beginning of the Sarvāstivāda/Mūlasarvāstivāda *Dīrgha-āgama* collection. The *Ṣaṭsūtraka-nipāta* was at times handed down independently of the whole collection.[82] The importance accorded in this way to summaries or maps of the Dharma is also reflected in the circumstance that the *Saṅgīti-sūtra* and the *Daśottara-sūtra* are explicitly mentioned in the account of the first *saṅgīti* in the Dharmaguptaka and Mahīśāsaka Vinayas.[83]

The Dharmaguptaka *Dīrgha-āgama* has another two discourses, attributed to the Buddha, which also belong to the genre of summaries of the Dharma. Both are without a parallel in the *Dīgha-nikāya* or the Sarvāstivāda/Mūlasarvāstivāda *Dīrgha-āgama*.[84] Instead of the tenfold grid used in the *Daśottara-sūtra*, the first of these two discourses, called "Increasing by One", employs a fivefold scheme, whereas the second of these two discourses, entitled "On the Three Groups", makes use of a threefold scheme.

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[81] The discourse has been preserved in Sanskrit fragments, in two Chinese translations, and in a Tibetan translation: Hartmann 1991: 319–336, T 97 at T I 919b22 to 922a23, T 98 at T I 922b5 to 924c28, and D 318 *sa* 188a7 to 193b7 or Q 984 *shu* 197b6 to 203a5.

[82] The popularity of this group of six discourses has already been noted by Schlingloff 1962: 7; cf. also Skilling 1980: 30f and the study by Hartmann 1994.

[83] T 1428 at T XXII 968b16 and T 1421 at T XXII 191a19; cf. also Mittal 1957: 14.

[84] However, the first of the two, DĀ 11, is mentioned in the description of the *Dīrgha-āgama* in the Mahīśāsaka Vinaya account of the first *saṅgīti*; cf. T 1421 at T XXII 191a19.

The fivefold scheme in the "Discourse Increasing by One" works through Ones to Tens based on the first four and the tenth topics in the *Daśottara-sūtra* scheme, taking up items from the perspective of their being:

1) greatly helpful,
2) to be cultivated,
3) to be understood,
4) to be extinguished,
5) to be realized.[85]

This discourse appears to be a shortened version of the presentation found in the *Daśottara-sūtra*. Such an extract would be easier to memorize than the whole of the *Daśottara-sūtra*, thereby enlarging the circle of those able and willing to commit this particular summary of the teachings to memory. The "Discourse Increasing by One" concludes with an injunction by the Buddha that the monks should meditate without negligence,[86] emphasizing that the purpose of the discourse is to provide an inspiration for actual meditation practice.

The threefold scheme in the "Discourse on the Three Groups" works through Ones to Tens based on three topics:

1) what leads towards a bad destiny,
2) what leads towards a good destiny,
3) what leads towards Nirvāṇa.[87]

This discourse also appears to have taken its inspiration from the Dharmaguptaka version of the *Daśottara-sūtra*, as all the items listed under the heading of what "leads towards Nirvāṇa" (3) correspond to what should be "cultivated" according to the *Daśottara-sūtra*. In the case of the Twos, Threes, Sixes, Nines, and Tens what leads to either a bad destiny (1) or else a good destiny (2) corresponds to what leads to decline

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[85] In the case of the Ones, DĀ 11 at T I 57c2 reads as follows: 一多成法 (adopting a variant that adds 多), 修法, 一覺法, 一滅法, 一證法; for a translation and study of DĀ 11 cf. Anālayo 2014d.

[86] DĀ 11 at T I 59b5.

[87] For the Ones, DĀ 12 at T I 59b20 reads: 一法趣惡趣, 一法趣善趣, 一法趣涅槃.

or else to increase according to the *Daśottara-sūtra*. In view of its brevity, it seems probable that the "Discourse on the Three Groups" came into being within an already existing *Dīrgha-āgama*, otherwise it would hardly have merited inclusion in a collection of "long discourses".[88]

Summaries of the Dharma can also be found in the *Madhyama-āgama*, a collection probably transmitted by Sarvāstivāda reciters.[89] One such instance is the "Discourse on Explaining the Spheres", which reports the Buddha delineating topics that Ānanda should teach to junior monks, that is, to monks who have recently been ordained.[90] In what follows I survey its list of thirty-one topics to be taught, which neatly exemplifies the way such lists can build up. The discourse begins with the five aggregates (1). Then it lists various aspects of sense-experience:

2) the six senses,
3) the six sense-objects,
4) the six types of consciousness,
5) the six types of contact,
6) the six types of feeling,
7) the six types of perception,
8) the six types of intention,
9) the six types of craving.

This thus offers a detailed breakdown of six sense-door experiences, a topic to which I will return when discussing the meditative analysis of

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[88] DĀ 12 ranges from T I 59b14 to 60a27 only. For a more detailed discussion and a translation of DĀ 12 cf. Anālayo 2013e.

[89] The general consensus by scholars on the school affiliation of the *Madhyama-āgama* has been called into question by Chung and Fukita 2011: 13–34; for a reply cf. Anālayo 2012c: 516–521.

[90] MĀ 86 at T I 562a19 to 565c26; the identification of this discourse by Akanuma 1929/1990: 13 as a parallel to MN 148 is not correct; instead MĀ 86 is best reckoned as not having a known parallel. Minh Chau 1964/1991: 36 comments that this discourse "testifies to a rather late stage of development", which together with MĀ 222 (a discourse I will discuss shortly) exhibits differences in the discourse collections of the Theravāda and the Sarvāstivāda traditions that "pave the way to their fundamental differences in their respective abhidharma works".

the four noble truths in the third chapter of this book. After this group of Sixes related to sense-door experience come:

10) the six elements,
11) the twelve links of dependent arising, expounded in both the arising and the cessation modes.

In this way, from the five aggregates (1) as a basic mode of analysis the discourse proceeds by taking up another and similarly basic mode of analysis, the six senses (2), which may have been the original starting point of the discourse, judging from its title on explaining “the spheres”, *āyatana*. The six senses then lead on to a detailed coverage of various components of experience through the six senses (3 to 9). The natural predominance of the number six that has resulted from this detailed breakdown of sense-experience then finds its continuation by way of the six elements (10), followed by yet another foundational teaching whose standard mode of presentation involves a doubling of six, namely the twelve links of dependent arising (11). Then the list continues instead with items that come in Fours:

12) the four establishments of mindfulness,
13) the four right efforts,
14) the four bases for supernormal ability,
15) the four absorptions,
16) the four noble truths,
17) the four perceptions,
18) the four boundless states (*apramāṇa*),
19) the four immaterial attainments,
20) the four noble traditions (*āryavaṃśa*),
21) the four fruits of recluseship (*śrāmaṇyaphala*).

Here the first three items are meditative practices that form the beginning of a list of seven sets, known in the tradition as being *bodhipākṣikā dharmāḥ*, which I will discuss later on in this chapter. Other items are meditative attainments: the absorptions (15), the boundless states (18), the immaterial attainments (19), and the four fruits of recluseship (21), the last representing the four levels of awakening. Thus in this group meditative practices and attainments are a dominant theme, alongside

the four noble truths (16) and the proper mode of conduct exemplified by the four noble traditions (20). Next comes a group of Fives:
22) the five perceptions ripening in liberation,
23) the five spheres of liberation,
24) the five faculties,
25) the five powers,
26) the five elements of release.

The five faculties (24) and powers (25) are also part of the seven sets, which here come together with three items that similarly stand in close relation to progress on the path to awakening: five perceptions ripening in liberation (22), the five spheres of liberation (23), which are the occasions when the breakthrough to awakening can take place, and the five elements of release (26), which describe release from sensuality, ill will, harmfulness, bodily form, and the sense of identity (*satkāya*).

Notably, even though this group consists of Fives, the five aggregates (1) are not part of it, but rather come at the beginning. This gives the impression of a gradual evolution of the whole list of thirty-one items, since otherwise the numerical principle evident in its later part would have been applied consistently by having the five aggregates as part of the present group, followed by the Sixes as the next group. Instead of Sixes, the list continues with Sevens:
27) the seven types of [spiritual] wealth,
28) the seven powers,
29) the seven awakening factors.

The first two groups here cover the same qualities of faith, morality, conscience, shame, learning, generosity, and wisdom, mentioned under two different headings (27 and 28). The awakening factors are again part of the seven sets. The same holds for the next item in the list, which is the noble eightfold path (30). The list concludes with the summit of the Dharma (31), which stands for contemplation of impermanence, *duḥkha*, emptiness and not-self.

The "Discourse on Explaining the Spheres" reports the Buddha making the following statement for each of these thirty-one topics:

> If you give this teaching to the junior monks ... they will obtain ease, they will obtain strength, they will obtain happiness, they will be untroubled in body and mind, and they will practise the holy life for their whole life.[91]

The concern expressed here is that newly ordained monks be taught in a way that ensures they will continue to live the holy life, *brahmacarya*, of a Buddhist monastic. This is reminiscent of the *Saṅgīti-sūtra*'s concern to ensure that the holy life will remain for a long time.

Notably, the majority of the discourse's topics recur as chapter headings in the *Dharmaskandha*.[92] Thus similar concerns and perhaps even some degree of direct influence appear to connect the list of topics that Ānanda should teach to young monks according to a Sarvāstivāda discourse and the basic thematic structure of an early work in the Sarvāstivāda Abhidharma collection.

The last discourse in the *Madhyama-āgama* exemplifies another significant tendency, namely the combining of different lists.[93] Whereas the "Discourse on Explaining the Spheres" shows the proliferation of a single list, this discourse exemplifies another way of using lists: by way of interrelation. The actual exposition in the discourse begins with the following indication:

> One who wishes to abandon ignorance should cultivate the four establishments of mindfulness. How should one who wishes to abandon ignorance cultivate the four establishments of mindfulness?[94]

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[91] MĀ 86 at T I 562b9 (for the first topic of the five aggregates): 若為諸年少比丘說教此 … 彼便得安隱, 得力, 得樂, 身心不煩熱, 終身行梵行.

[92] Watanabe 1983/1996: 54 points out the following correspondences with T 1537: (1) → chapter 19, (2) → chapter 18, (10) → chapter 20, (11) → chapter 21, (12) → chapter 9, (13) → chapter 7, (14) → chapter 8, (15) → chapter 11, (16) → chapter 10, (18) → chapter 12, (19) → chapter 13, (20) → chapter 6, (21) → chapter 4, (24) → chapter 17 (although instead of the five faculties mentioned in MĀ 86, chapter 17 in T 1537 takes up twenty-two faculties), (29) → chapter 15, and (30) → chapter 10.

[93] MĀ 222 at T I 805c10 to 809a25, another discourse that does not appear to have a parallel in other discourse collections.

[94] MĀ 222 at T I 805c13: 若欲斷無明者, 當修四念處. 云何欲斷無明者, 當修四念處?

In reply to this question, the discourse provides an account of the gradual path, given in abbreviation, from the arising of a Tathāgata to the removal of the five hindrances.[95] Undertaking this gradual path provides the proper basis for cultivating the four establishments of mindfulness. This completes the first section of the exposition.

Undertaking the gradual path is similarly necessary for a variety of activities in relation to ignorance which, including the already mentioned abandoning, are as follows:

a) to abandon it,
b) to abandon it repeatedly,
c) to be liberated from it,
d) to transcend it,
e) to root it out,
f) to extinguish it,
g) to know it completely,
h) to know it distinctly.

In this way, the effect of the four establishments of mindfulness in relation to ignorance is presented in terms of eight types of activities (a to h).[96]

This exposition – from abandoning to distinctly knowing – is then related to the four right efforts (2) instead of the four establishments of mindfulness, and then to several other items. These items are as follows:

1) the four establishments of mindfulness,
2) the four right efforts,
3) the four bases for supernormal ability,
4) the four absorptions,
5) the five faculties,
6) the five powers,
7) the seven awakening factors,
8) the noble eightfold path,

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[95] On the gradual path cf., e.g., Franke 1917: 50–80, Eimer 1976: 26–34, Bucknell 1984, Meisig 1987b: 35–80, Ramers 1996, Freiberger 2000: 71-86, Sujato 2005: 157–159, Melzer 2006: 12–24, and Anālayo 2015.

[96] After 斷, MĀ 222 (e.g., T I 805c19) reads: 數斷, 解脫, 過度, 拔絕, 滅止, 總知, 別知.

9) the ten totalities (*kṛtsna*),
10) the ten factors of one beyond training (*aśaikṣa*).

Once the discourse has worked through this list from (1) to (10), each time by way of the eight activities (a to h), it moves from ignorance (i) to the next of the twelve links of dependent arising, so that the entire exposition is executed for each of them:

i) ignorance,
ii) formations,
iii) consciousness,
iv) name-and-form,
v) six senses,
vi) contact,
vii) feeling,
viii) craving,
ix) clinging,
x) becoming,
xi) birth,
xii) old age and death.

Thus the discourse as a whole is based on combining these three lists: the list of eight activities (a to h), the list of ten mental qualities and practices (1 to 10), and the twelve links of dependent arising (i to xii).

If the discourse were to be executed in full, without abbreviations, then it would become more than twice as long as the whole *Madhyama-āgama* collection.[97] Clearly, this discourse came into being with its

[97] The gradual path account until the removal of the five hindrances given elsewhere in the *Madhyama-āgama* covers nearly one page in the Taishō edition (cf., e.g., MĀ 146 at T I 656c27 to 657c21 or MĀ 187 at T I 733a16 to 734a8, the last is slightly shorter as it does not explicitly mention the arising of a Tathāgata). Together with the activity to be undertaken – such as abandoning ignorance through the four establishments of mindfulness – this would amount to one full page. Executing the variations from abandoning to distinctly knowing (a to h) would result in eight pages. Repeating the same for the ten meditative practices and qualities (1 to 10) would yield eighty pages. Applied to each of the twelve links of dependent arising (i to xii) would result in a discourse of 960 pages in length. The *Madhyama-āgama* (the longest of the four *Āgama*s preserved in Chinese translation) ranges from T I 421a8 to 809a25 and thus covers 388 pages.

abbreviations already in place and it may well never have been recited or written in its fully expanded form. Such combining of different lists, with the resulting permutations usually given only in abbreviation, is a feature found regularly in Abhidharma works. Nevertheless, the actual contents of the discourse do not seem to reflect the influence of the Abhidharma.

The same holds for the "Discourse on Explaining the Spheres". Even though its topics recur as chapter headings in the *Dharmaskandha*, the presentation of these topics in the "Discourse on Explaining the Spheres" does not appear to be an expression of Abhidharma thought.

A relationship between a discourse that presents a summary of the Dharma and a canonical Abhidharma work becomes particularly evident with the *Saṅgīti-sūtra*, since a commentary on this discourse has become a canonical work of the Sarvāstivāda Abhidharma collection under the title *Saṅgītiparyāya*.

The *Saṅgītiparyāya* not only closely follows the list of topics in the *Saṅgīti-sūtra*,[98] it even has a similar introductory narration which relates the exposition to the passing away of the Buddha. Similar to the *Saṅgīti-sūtra*, the *Saṅgītiparyāya* emphasizes that the function of its exposition is to ensure harmony through the undertaking of communal recitation:

> We should now listen, the Buddha being [still] alive, and in harmony collect the Dharma and Vinaya. Let there be no quarrel among the disciples of the Blessed One after the Tathāgata's final Nirvāṇa.[99]

In spite of the evidently close connection between these two works, the contents of the *Saṅgīti-sūtra* appear to be just culled from various discourses and in themselves do not seem to be Abhidharma, however much the formal aspects of the discourse parallel characteristics of Abhidharma texts.

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[98] Already La Vallée Poussin 1923/1971: vii noted that both are based on the same *mātṛkā*; cf. also, e.g., Waldschmidt 1955: 300, Stache-Rosen 1968: 9f, and Tripāṭhī 1985.

[99] T 1536 at T XXVI 367b22: 我等今應聞, 佛住世, 和合結集法毘奈耶, 勿使如來般涅槃後, 世尊弟子有所乖諍.



Figure 1.3 The Buddha’s Passing Away

The relief vividly expresses the sense of loss that the Buddha’s demise must have evoked among many of his disciples. The Buddha is shown with his face covered by his robes, conveying the fact that from now on his disciples will no longer be able to see him or be seen by him. Directly below the covered face his close attendant Ānanda is depicted overwhelmed by grief. The scene thus provides a telling contrast to the relief on the cover of the present book, which shows the Buddha alive and delivering a teaching, surrounded by listeners with devout attention.

Gandhāra, courtesy Museum für Asiatische Kunst, Berlin.[100]

[100] Museum für Asiatische Kunst, Kunstsammlung Süd-, Südost- und Zentralasien, Staatliche Museen Berlin, Stiftung Preussischer Kulturbesitz, Inv. No I 80 (picture: Georg Niedermeiser).

1.4 The Seven Sets

The need to ensure communal harmony, in the face of the apparent strife between Jain followers, is also taken up in the *Pāsādika-sutta* and the *Sāmagāma-sutta*, as well as in their parallels.[101] The parallel versions report that the Buddha taught a short *mātṛkā*, containing seven sets of mental qualities and practices known as the *bodhipākṣikā dharmāḥ*:[102]

– the four establishments of mindfulness (*smṛtyupasthāna*),
– the four right efforts (*samyakpradhāna*),
– the four bases for supernormal ability (*ṛddhipāda*),
– the five faculties (*indriya*),
– the five powers (*bala*),
– the seven factors of awakening (*bodhyaṅga*),
– the noble eightfold path (*āryāṣṭāṅga mārga*).

The same seven sets of qualities and practices related to awakening also feature in most versions of the *Mahāparinirvāṇa-sūtra*, where they occur as a teaching given by the Buddha right after he had given up his will to live (*āyuḥsaṃskāra*).[103] Other occurrences in Pāli discourses that have a parallel in the discourse collections of other schools indicate that these seven sets are gems of the Dharma,[104] that they constitute the path

[101] DN 29 at DN III 127,27 and its parallel DĀ 17 at T I 74a14 (which includes the four absorptions, a characteristic feature of the *Dīrgha-āgama* already noted by Bronkhorst 1985: 306 note 8); as well as MN 104 at MN II 245,8 and its parallels MĀ 196 at T I 753c6 and T 85 at T I 905a27.

[102] For a detailed study of these seven sets cf. Gethin 1992.

[103] DN 16 at DN II 120,3, Waldschmidt 1951: 224,14 (§19.9), DĀ 2 at T I 16c10 (which includes the four absorptions), T 6 at T I 181b8 (which also includes the four absorptions), and T 7 at T I 193a2. The seven sets are not mentioned in the corresponding part of T 5; Waldschmidt 1944: 116 comments that T 5 changes the sermon in a rather idiosyncratic way, such marked differences being repeatedly found in this version, "wandelt das Predigtthema sehr eigenwillig ab. Solche starken Unterschiede gerade bei Predigten finden sich in dieser Version mehrfach."

[104] AN 8.19 at AN IV 203,17 (cf. also Ud 5.5 at Ud 56,10 and Vin II 240,2) and its parallels MĀ 35 at T I 476c20 and EĀ 42.4 at T II 753b2 (adopting a variant reading that adds the four *smṛtyupasthāna*s to the list).

to the destruction of the influxes,[105] and that having successfully cultivated them is characteristic of arhats.[106]

This basic list thus covers the mental qualities that tradition considers crucial for progress to awakening;[107] and it is this *mātṛkā* which according to the *Mahāparinirvāṇa-sūtra* was taught by the Buddha just before his passing away, and the *mātṛkā* that the *Pāsādika-sutta* and the *Sāmagāma-sutta* as well as their parallels recommend for ensuring communal harmony.

Even this rather short *mātṛkā* of seven sets already seems to be the outcome of some degree of growth beyond what is absolutely necessary from a practical perspective. Whereas the other sets take up what are distinct presentations, notwithstanding some overlap, the five faculties (*indriya*) are the same as the five powers (*bala*). Both cover the qualities of faith, energy, mindfulness, concentration, and wisdom, the only difference is the name given to these five: "faculties" or "powers".[108]

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[105] SN 22.81 at SN III 96,7 and its parallel SĀ 57 at T II 14a7; a presentation which recurs as a discourse quotation in the *Dharmaskandha*, Dietz 1984: 52f and T 1537 at T XXVI 511b12; and in the *Abhidharmakośopāyikā-ṭīkā*, D 4094 *ju* 72a1 or Q 5595 *tu* 80b7.

[106] AN 8.28 at AN IV 225,5 and its parallels SĀ 694 at T II 188b26 (the same presentation is repeated with a different narrative introduction in the next two discourses, SĀ 695 and SĀ 696) and a quotation in the *Abhidharmakośopāyikā-ṭīkā*, D 4094 *nyu* 37a6 or Q 5595 *thu* 74b8.

[107] The relation to progress towards awakening is the basic theme of several Pāli discourses in which the seven sets occur, such as, e.g., MN 149 at MN III 289,10 and its parallels SĀ 305 at T II 87c3 and a quotation in the *Abhidharmakośopāyikā-ṭīkā*, D 4094 *ju* 205a3 or Q 5595 *tu* 234a3; or SN 22.101 at SN III 154,5 and its parallels AN 7.67 at AN IV 126,20, SĀ 263 at T II 67b12, and a Gāndhārī fragment (where only the negative formulation has been preserved), Glass 2007: 198; cf. also the Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinaya, T 1448 at T XXIV 31c18 (leaving out instances in the Pāli discourses that have no parallels in other traditions). As Gethin 1992: 235 points out, "the nature of the appeal to the seven sets is a matter of appeal to practice and experience rather than an appeal to theory and scripture."

[108] SN 48.43 at SN V 219,21 (of which no parallel seems to be extant) explains that in principle the five powers are the same as the five faculties, a situation explained with the help of a simile that describes looking at a river from an island in the middle of the river. Depending on where one stands and in what direction one looks, one might

When considered from a practical perspective, a list of qualities and practices that are essential for awakening covered under the seven sets could be arrived at by mentioning only six sets, leaving aside the five powers, once the five faculties have been mentioned.[109] Although the distinction between faculties and powers might be pointing to each set performing different functions, in a bare list of qualities required for reaching awakening it would seem sufficient if the set of five qualities – faith, energy, mindfulness, concentration, and wisdom – is mentioned just once.[110]

Be that as it may, the seven sets are found under the corresponding numerical sections in the *Saṅgīti-sūtra*. The Fours of all four versions of the *Saṅgīti-sūtra* list the establishments of mindfulness, the right efforts, and the bases for supernormal ability in precisely this sequence.[111] The faculties and powers occur among the Fives of all versions, except

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see the water as two rivers (on both sides of the island) or as a single river (above or below the island).

[109] In fact the *Saṅgīti-sutta* only mentions the five faculties; cf. below note 112. Here it is also noteworthy that, as observed by Choong 2012: 88f, "not one discourse is common to the *Bala Saṃyukta* of SA and the *Bala Saṃyutta* of SN … it may be that both traditions felt a need to fill up a nearly empty *Bala Saṃyukta/Bala Saṃyutta*. This would mean that the *Bala Saṃyukta* in both traditions was a largely artificial creation."

[110] An advantage of mentioning both is that in this way the list of the *bodhipākṣikā dharmāḥ* comprises seven sets, in line with the symbolic sense of the number seven as conveying a sense of completeness. Rhys Davids and Stede 1921/1993: 673 s.v. *satta*[4] explain that seven is "a collective and concluding (serial) number", "with a peculiar *magic* nimbus"; cf. also Senart 1882a: 285f and Sen 1974: 64. For a survey of some examples that show a symbolic usage of seven as representative of a complete time cycle in Buddhist texts cf. Anālayo 2011a: 471f note 158. According to Dumont 1962: 73, the number seven in ancient India "indicates a totality"; Gombrich 1975: 118 notes that "seven is a favourite Vedic number"; cf. also Bhattacharyya 1969: 57: "seven was a conventional number favoured by the people." On the number seven in religious traditions in general cf., e.g., Davidson 1917: 406, Keith 1917: 407f and 413, and Schimmel 1987: 15f. On the significance of seven in relation to the mind's ability to process information cf. Miller 1956.

[111] DN 33 at DN III 221,6 (4.1–3); Stache-Rosen 1968: 93f (4.1–3); cf. also SHT VIII 1922aV, Bechert and Wille 2000: 103, SHT IX 2214 R, Bechert and Wille 2004: 137; DĀ 9 at T I 50c9 (4.11–13); and T 12 at T I 228b16 (4.1–3).

for the Theravāda discourse, which only has the five faculties.[112] The Sevens have the factors of awakening and the Eights the members of the noble eightfold path.[113]

This is a remarkable degree of correspondence among the otherwise quite divergent lists in the parallel versions of the *Saṅgīti-sūtra*. Such correspondence supports the impression that the thirty-seven qualities or practices assembled under the seven sets may have formed one or even the starting point from which the list in the *Saṅgīti-sūtra* developed; and the *Saṅgīti-sūtra* in turn is clearly the basis for the *Saṅgīti-paryāya* of the Sarvāstivāda Abhidharma collection.[114]

Although the Theravāda Abhidharma does not have a work corresponding to the *Saṅgītiparyāya*, the same tendency can be seen at work here as well. Thus, for example, a *mātṛkā* in the *Dhammasaṅgaṇī* matches closely the list of terms under the Twos in the Theravāda version of the *Saṅgīti-sutta*.[115] Again, the *Puggalapaññatti* adopts the same basic pat-

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[112] DN 33 at DN III 239,15 (5.23); Stache-Rosen 1968: 153 (5.20–21); cf. also Or 15003/131 Vb-c, Wille 2006: 106; DĀ 9 at T I 51b13 (5.6–7); and T 12 at T I 230a28 (5.7–8).

[113] DN 33 at DN III 251,23 (7.2); Stache-Rosen 1968: 175 (7.1); DĀ 9 at T I 52b7 (7.7); and T 12 at T I 232b28 (7.1). DN 33 at DN III 255,1 (8.2); Stache-Rosen 1968: 188 (8.1); DĀ 9 at T I 52b18 (8.3); and T 12 at T I 233a17 (8.4).

[114] Bronkhorst 1985: 305 comments on the seven sets that "it seems clear that this is an early, perhaps the earliest, list of the type that came to be called *mātṛkā*/P. *mātikā* and formed the basis for the later Abhidharma works." According to Buswell and Jaini 1996: 82, "the beginnings of Abhidharma are found in certain fundamental listings of *dharma*s … the most important of these early listings was that of the thirty-seven limbs of enlightenment."

[115] This is the *suttantamātikā* in Dhs 7,14, which has its counterpart in DN 33 at DN III 212,9; a correspondence pointed out by Frauwallner 1964: 71 note 28. To illustrate the close degree of correspondence, in what follows I list the serial number of the item in the *suttantamātikā* in the *Dhammasaṅgaṇī*, followed by the number of the corresponding item in the Twos of the *Saṅgīti-sutta*: 9→1, 10→2, 11→3, 15→4, 16→5, 17→6, 18→7, 19→8, 20→9, 21→10, 22→11, 23→12, 24→13, 25→14, 26→15, 29→17, 30→18, 31→21, 32→23, 33→24, 34→25, 35→27, 36→26, 37→28, 38→29, 39→30, 40→31, 41→32, and 42→33; at which point the *suttantamātikā* in Dhs and the Twos in DN 33 both come to an end. Frauwallner 1972: 121 further notes that the exegesis of these items in the *Dhammasaṅgaṇī* seems rather earlier and at times incorporates discourse material, which further confirms the impression that

tern of proceeding from Ones to Tens as the *Saṅgīti-sūtra* and the *Saṅgītiparyāya*, here first presented in *mātṛkā* form, followed by working out the details of this *mātṛkā*.[116] The beginning parts of the *Paṭisambhidāmagga*, a work of Abhidharma character found in the fifth *Nikāya* of the Pāli canon, appear to be based on extracts from the Theravāda version of the *Dasuttara-sutta*.[117]

Nevertheless, the Abhidharma is not the mere product of the proliferation of lists. As the titles of the *Saṅgīti-sūtra* and of the *Saṅgītiparyāya* make clear, communal recitation is central to their purpose; and the basis for such communal recitation is a text that provides as comprehensive a summary of the teachings as possible. This is what informs the list of the seven sets, the list in the *Saṅgīti-sūtra*, as well as its exegesis in the *Saṅgītiparyāya*.

The dynamic that stands behind this trajectory is the wish to summarize the teachings, to arrive at a succinct but still complete presentation of the essentials of the Dharma. The function of such a presentation lies in its providing a guide for practice and a basis for group recitation as a way of ensuring harmony among the disciples after the teacher's death. It is because of this thrust towards comprehensive summarizing that several of the lists surveyed in this chapter have had such an impact on the emergence of the Abhidharma. I will examine other related dynamics that contributed to the "dawn" of the Abhidharma in the next chapters.

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this part of the *Dhammasaṅgaṇī* could go back to a text similar in kind to the *Saṅgītiparyāya*; cf. Dhs 226,36 (1309 to 1367). Aung 1910/1912: 115f highlights the importance accorded by tradition to the *mātikā* of the *Dhammasaṅgaṇī*, reflected in a series of commentaries that have been composed on it in Burma.

116 Morris 1883/1972: ix introduces his edition of the *Puggalapaññatti* by remarking that "its *form* seems to have been modelled upon that of the Saṅgîti-suttantaṃ of the Dîgha-nikâya. This sutta, as technical and dry in its treatment of its subject as any Abhidhamma treatise, and not, in many cases, any fuller than the Mâtikâ to the present work, treats of the *dasa dhammâ* or ten conditions much in the same way as the work before us deals with the *dasa puggalâ* or ten individuals"; cf. also Takakusu 1905: 161. For a study of the *Puggalapaññatti* in relation to expositions on persons in the early discourses and the light this sheds on the beginnings of the Abhidharma cf. Kuan 2014.

117 Warder 1982: xxxi–xxxiv.

2 Wisdom and Early Canonical Abhidharma

In this chapter I study a list of elements found in the *Bahudhātuka-sūtra* and its parallels as part of a set of topics whose knowledge forms the basis for the cultivation of wisdom. Then I turn to the significance of references to the term *abhidharma* in the early discourses and to the nature of early canonical Abhidharma texts. My overall aim in the present chapter is to explore a few instances where passages in the early discourses have gone through a process of expansion, as well as to ascertain the basically commentarial nature of early canonical Abhidharma texts.

2.1 Wisdom and the Elements

In what follows I briefly survey the significance of "wisdom" and the "elements" in general, before turning to their exposition in the *Bahudhātuka-sūtra*. According to the quote I have placed at the beginning of the introduction to this book, the purpose of wisdom is disenchantment, dispassion, and seeing as it really is.[1] The central role of wisdom in early Buddhist thought finds reflection in various similes, according to which wisdom is like a knife that digs up ignorance,[2] or that cuts the bondage of desire.[3] Wisdom could be compared to the rampart of a

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[1] MĀ 211 at T I 790c22: "wisdom has the purpose of disenchantment, the purpose of dispassion, and the purpose of seeing as it really is", 智慧者有厭義, 無欲義, 見如真義, parallel to MN 43 at MN I 293,36: "wisdom has the purpose of direct knowledge, the purpose of penetrative knowledge, and the purpose of abandoning", *paññā … abhiññatthā pariññatthā pahānatthā*; cf. above page 11.

[2] MN 23 at MN I 144,10 and its parallels T 95 at T I 918c26, SĀ 1079 at T II 282b28, SĀ[2] 18 at T II 379c29, and EĀ 39.9 at T II 733c17.

[3] MN 146 at MN III 275,18 and its parallels SĀ 276 at T II 75b12 (translated Anālayo 2010a: 348) and the Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinaya, T 1442 at T XXIII 793b22, with a Tibetan counterpart in D 3 *ja* 56b5 or Q 1032 *nye* 54a1 (translated Martini 2010: 390); cf. also the *Yogācārabhūmi*, T 1579 at T XXX 748a9 and Schmithausen 1969: 46,5.

border town, which provides protection to its inhabitants and keeps off enemies,[4] or to the peak of a roof, which offers stability to the rafters.[5] No light shines brighter than wisdom,[6] and the peak of wisdom is reached with full liberation.[7] Liberating wisdom then finds its expression in early Buddhism in the scheme of the four noble truths, to which I will turn in the next chapter.

Regarding the elements, the discourses frequently mention a set of four: earth, water, fire, and wind. These four elements feature in the description of mindfulness meditation in the form of *smṛtyupasthāna*, where the body is to be seen as composed of these four basic material qualities of solidity, fluidity, warmth, and motion.[8] Alternatively the four elements can become the object for the cultivation of meditative absorption, *dhyāna*, in the form of a perceptual totality, *kṛtsna*.[9] Adding space and consciousness to these four elements yields a set of six elements, a detailed analysis of which can be found in the *Dhātuvibhaṅga-sūtra*, the "Discourse on an Analysis of the Elements".[10]

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[4] AN 7.63 at AN IV 111,8 and its parallel MĀ 3 at T I 423c19.

[5] SN 48.52 at SN V 228,17 and its parallel SĀ 654 at T II 183b21.

[6] SN 1.13 at SN I 6,18 and its parallels SĀ 1006 at T II 263b21 and SĀ² 232 at T II 458c11.

[7] MN 140 at MN III 245,14 and its parallels MĀ 162 at T I 692a11 and a quotation in the *Abhidharmakośopāyikā-ṭīkā*, D 4094 *ju* 40b4 or Q 5595 *tu* 44a4.

[8] MN 10 at MN I 57,35 (= DN 22 at DN II 294,14) and its parallel EĀ 12.1 at T II 568a24. Another parallel, MĀ 98 at T I 583b18, instead lists six elements. This seems to be a case of later expansion, as the sixth element of consciousness does not fall naturally under the main heading for this section, contemplation of the body.

[9] A listing of the ten *kṛtsna*s, beginning with the four elements, can be found, e.g., in DN 33 at DN III 268,20 (10.2) and Stache-Rosen 1968: 203 (10.1). On the original sense of *kṛtsna* as a totality cf., e.g., Vetter 1988: 66f, Wynne 2007: 32f, and Anālayo 2009d: 668.

[10] MN 140 at MN III 240,17 and its parallels MĀ 162 at T I 690c12, T 511 at T XIV 780a11 (which has the exposition of the six elements at an earlier point and thus not in as direct a relation to wisdom as the other versions), and a quotation in the *Abhidharmakośopāyikā-ṭīkā*, D 4094 *ju* 36a1 or Q 5595 *tu* 39a5. Wynne 2007: 39 and 36 explains that in Brahminic thought "element meditation, so we must understand, was thought to be the yogin's way of reversing the creation of the cosmos and attaining liberation." Thus "the progression 'earth → water → fire → wind → space → con-



Figure 2.1 The Twin Miracle

The stele shows the Buddha performing the twin miracle, which requires the simultaneous manifestation of fire and water emerging from different parts of one's own body,[11] an expression of complete mastery over these material elements. In the above stele fire can be seen to emerge from the Buddha's shoulders whereas water flows from his lower body.

Gandhāra, courtesy Musée Guimet.

sciousness', seems to be little more than an inversion of a cosmogony identical to that stated at Mbh [*Mahābhārata*] XII.224. From this perspective, the Buddhist lists of element meditation seem to reflect a Brahminic cosmogony."

[11] On the twin miracle cf., e.g., Foucher 1909: 10–16, Lüders 1941/1966: 62–73, Brown 1984, Verardi 1988: 1540f, Karetzky 1990: 72f, Rhi 1991: 51–72, Schlingloff 1991, Skilling 1997: 303–315, Zhu 2006: 255f, Anālayo 2009f, and Fiordalis 2010/2011: 401f.

Less emphasis on the material aspect of existence is evident in another recurrent analysis of elements in relation to the senses, where the six senses, their objects, and the corresponding types of consciousness together make up a set of eighteen elements. The eighteen elements related to sense-experience and the six elements covering matter and consciousness appear at the outset of a detailed survey of various elements in the *Bahudhātuka-sūtra* and its parallels. This discourse is extant in the following versions, given according to their school affiliation:

- Mūlasarvāstivāda tradition: a discourse preserved in Tibetan translation;[12] a discourse quotation in the *Abhidharmakośopāyikā-ṭīkā*, also extant in Tibetan translation;[13] and a partial quotation that covers the exposition of the elements in the *Abhidharmakośavyākhyā*;[14]
- Sarvāstivāda tradition: a *Madhyama-āgama* discourse, preserved in Chinese translation;[15] and a discourse found as a quotation in the *Dharmaskandha*, preserved in Chinese translation;[16]
- Theravāda tradition: a *Majjhima-nikāya* discourse, preserved in Pāli;[17]
- uncertain school affiliation: a discourse translated individually into Chinese.[18]

The main topic of the *Bahudhātuka-sūtra* is wisdom, a topic broached by contrasting a fool or foolishness with a wise one or being wise. Most versions illustrate the predicament of foolishness with the example of a fire that starts from little, but which may eventually burn down a whole

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[12] D 297 *sha* 297a2 to 301b2 or Q 963 *lu* 325b3 to 330b1.

[13] D 4094 *ju* 28b2 to 33b4 or Q 5595 *tu* 31b1 to 36b6. The relevant passage in the *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya* gives the count of sixty-two elements, Pradhan 1967: 18,7: *evaṃ bahudhātuke 'pi dvaṣaṣṭir dhātavo deśitāḥ*.

[14] Wogihara 1932: 55,17 to 56,9.

[15] MĀ 181 at T I 723a8 to 724c3; translated in Anālayo 2012c: 255–267. Regarding the school affiliation of this collection cf. above page 41 note 89.

[16] T 1537 at T XXVI 501b25 to 502c18, where this discourse quotation forms the beginning of the twentieth chapter on "many elements".

[17] MN 115 at MN III 61,4 to 67,34.

[18] T 776 at T XVII 712b10 to 714a1.

house.[19] The opposite case of wisdom requires insight into the central categories of the Dharma, such as knowledge of the elements.

In what follows, I translate the part of the discourse that surveys the elements whose knowledge leads to the gaining of wisdom. Since my interest in the present study is the trajectory from the early discourses to the early canonical Abhidharma, I base my study on the discourse quotation found in the twentieth chapter of the *Dharmaskandha*, which reads as follows:

> Ānanda said: "How is a wise one skilled in the elements?"
>
> The Buddha said: (1) "A wise one who knows and sees as they really are eighteen elements is skilled in the elements: that is, one knows and sees as they really are the eye element, the form element, and the eye-consciousness element; the ear element, the sound element, and the ear-consciousness element; the nose element, the odour element, and the nose-consciousness element; the tongue element, the taste element, and the tongue-consciousness element; the body element, the tactile element, and the body-consciousness element; the mind element, the mind-object element, and the mind-consciousness element.
>
> (2) "Again, knowing and seeing as they really are six elements one is skilled in the elements: that is, one knows and sees as they really are the earth element, the water element, the fire element, the wind element, the space element, and the consciousness element.
>
> (3) "Again, knowing and seeing as they really are six elements one is skilled in the elements: that is, one knows and sees as they really are the element of sensual desire, the element of ill will, the element of harming, the element of dispassion, the element of non-ill will, and the element of non-harming.
>
> (4) "Again, knowing and seeing as they really are six elements one is skilled in the elements: that is, one knows and sees as they really are the element of pleasure, the element of pain, the element of

[19] T 776 at T XVII 712b26 only describes the making of a fire, without detailing its detrimental effects. I take this to be a textual loss, since a reference to a fire on its own does not illustrate the problem caused by a fool.

joy, the element of sadness, the element of equanimity, and the element of ignorance.

(5) "Again, knowing and seeing as they really are four elements one is skilled in the elements: that is, one knows and sees as they really are the element of feeling, the element of perception,[20] the element of formations, and the element of consciousness.

(6) "Again, knowing and seeing as they really are three elements one is skilled in the elements: that is, one knows and sees as they really are the sense-sphere element, the [fine-]material element, and the immaterial element.

(7) "Again, knowing and seeing as they really are three elements one is skilled in the elements: that is, one knows and sees as they really are the material element, the immaterial element, and the element of cessation.

(8) "Again, knowing and seeing as they really are three elements one is skilled in the elements: that is, one knows and sees as they really are the element of the past, the element of the future, and the element of the present.

(9) "Again, knowing and seeing as they really are three elements one is skilled in the elements: that is, one knows and sees as they really are the inferior element, the middling element, and the sublime element.

(10) "Again, knowing and seeing as they really are three elements one is skilled in the elements: that is, one knows and sees as they really are the wholesome element, the unwholesome element, and the undetermined element.

(11) "Again, knowing and seeing as they really are three elements one is skilled in the elements: that is, one knows and sees as they really are the element of being in training (*śaikṣa*), the element of no [longer] being in training, the element of being neither in training nor no [longer] in training.

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[20] For ease of understanding, I adopt the standard rendering of *saṃjñā* (想) as "perception", although the rendering "(conceptual) identification" proposed by Potter 1996: 128 would in my view better capture the significance of the term.

(12) "Again, knowing and seeing as they really are two elements one is skilled in the elements: that is, one knows and sees as they really are the element with influxes (*āsava*) and the element without influxes.

(13) "Again, knowing and seeing as they really are two elements one is skilled in the elements: that is, one knows and sees as they really are the conditioned element and the unconditioned element.

"This is called being a wise one who is skilled in the elements."[21]

Before comparing the actual elements listed in the different versions of the *Bahudhātuka-sūtra*, I would like to note briefly a formal difference between the parallel versions. In the above passage from the *Dharma-skandha*, the Buddha expounds the whole list of elements without interruption. The same is the case for the other versions preserved in Chinese and Tibetan translation. In the Pāli version, however, each time one set of elements has been expounded, Ānanda intervenes with a question, asking if there could be yet another way in which a monk can be reckoned skilled in the elements.[22]

In this way, the *Majjhima-nikāya* discourse differs from its parallels by adopting a question-and-answer format. This formal difference does not make the *Majjhima-nikāya* presentation any more an expression of Abhidharma thought than its parallels. In fact, the Pāli version has the shortest list of elements, so that it exhibits the tendency to compile lists to a lesser degree than its parallels.

This observation relates back to my discussion in the last chapter, in that the use of the question-and-answer format is simply a natural occurrence in an oral setting and need not in itself be seen as an expression of Abhidharma thought, however much this format may be prominent in Abhidharma texts. The same also holds for the use of lists, as in the present case. The mere fact of listing various elements does not necessarily mean that the *Bahudhātuka-sūtra* must be influenced by the

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[21] The translated section is found in T 1537 at T XXVI 501c14 to 502a8 (for ease of reference, in my translation I number the sets of elements; the numbering is not found in the original).

[22] MN 115 at MN III 62,19+26+33 and 63,4+10.

Abhidharma. Nor does the fact that this list is quoted in a canonical Abhidharma text of the Sarvāstivāda tradition turn the *Bahudhātuka-sūtra* into an Abhidharma text itself. Nevertheless, the growth of the list of elements that can be discerned by comparing the parallel versions of the *Bahudhātuka-sūtra* does reflect a tendency that is of considerable relevance for the emergence of the Abhidharma.

Regarding the actual list of elements, the above set of sixty-two elements recurs in the Mūlasarvāstivāda versions and in the Sarvāstivāda discourse found in the *Madhyama-āgama*. The same list also occurs in the *Saṅgītiparyāya*,[23] where it serves as a commentary on a reference to being "skilled in the elements", found in the Sarvāstivāda version of the *Saṅgīti-sūtra*.[24]

The parallel to the *Bahudhātuka-sūtra* preserved as an individual translation in Chinese, however, lists only fifty-six elements. It lacks two sets of three:
– group (7): material/immaterial/cessation,
– group (8): past/future/present.

The Theravāda version in the *Majjhima-nikāya* lists only forty-one elements. Besides groups (7) and (8), it also lacks the following sets:
– group (5): feeling/perception/formations/consciousness,
– group (9): inferior/middle/sublime,
– group (10): wholesome/unwholesome/undetermined,
– group (11): in training/no [longer] in training/neither,
– group (12): with influxes/without influxes.

Such variations could in principle be due to the following reasons: intentional omission, loss of text, or expansion of text.

As regards the first possibility, intentional omission from the Theravāda discourse seems improbable, since other Pāli discourses list the elements that are not found in the Pāli version of the *Bahudhātuka-sutta*. The four elements (5) corresponding to the four immaterial aggregates,

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[23] T 1536 at T XXVI 371a29 to 371b16.

[24] Stache-Rosen 1968: 52 (2.10). Such a reference is also found in DN 33 at DN III 212,19 (2.10), but absent from the Twos in DĀ 9 and T 12.

which anyway are part of the standard list of the five aggregates in various Pāli discourses, occur in the *Mahāmāluṅkya-sutta*, where these four are employed as part of an analysis of concentration attainments.[25] The groups of three elements (7 to 11) are all mentioned in the *Saṅgīti-sutta*.[26] The group of two elements (12) occurs, for example, in the *Mahācattārīsaka-sutta* in relation to the factors of the eightfold path,[27] a topic to which I will return in a subsequent chapter. Given these occurrences, there would have been little reason for those responsible for the transmission of the Theravāda version to eliminate these groups from the discourse deliberately.

The possibility of a loss of text is not particularly probable. Not only does the Theravāda version in the *Majjhima-nikāya* not show any evident sign of textual loss, but this explanation would also require two stages of accidental loss: a loss of the two groups (7 and 8) now absent from the Theravāda version and the version preserved as an individual Chinese translation; and then a separate loss of the other five groups (5 and 9 to 12). Although elsewhere in the same *Majjhima-nikāya* a substantial textual loss did occur,[28] this left traces and moreover is a case of

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[25] MN 64 at MN I 436,21+29.

[26] Group (7) in DN 33 at DN III 215,21 (3.14); group (8), further specified to be three "periods", at DN III 216,16 (3.24); group (9) at DN III 215,23 (3.15); group (10), in the form of three "formations" that are meritorious, demeritorious, and imperturbable, at DN III 217,25 (3.35); and group (11), further specified to be "persons", at DN III 218,1 (3.36).

[27] MN 117 at MN III 72,6; the same set of two is also applied to supernormal powers in DN 28 at DN III 112,7, to happiness in AN 2.7 at AN I 81,1, and to the ten courses of action in AN 10.133 at AN V 275,20.

[28] An example is the *Chabbisodhana-sutta*, MN 112 at MN III 29,19 to 37,4, which in its title announces an exposition of a sixfold purity, but the actual exposition only has five such purities. The parallel MĀ 187 at T I 732a21 to 734a25 has six purities. The Pāli commentary, Ps IV 94,23, reports an opinion voiced by what appear to be monks from India, according to whom precisely the type of purity found only in MĀ 187 (cf. T I 732b13) should be added to the exposition of MN 112 in order to fit the title *chabbisodhana*. This makes it safe to conclude that MN 112 has lost the exposition of one purity and thus a substantial portion of text at some point in its transmission; cf. in more detail Anālayo 2012c: 223f.

a single loss, not a double loss in stages as would be required in the present instance.

The discourse versions of the *Bahudhātuka-sūtra* agree in covering four topics, of which the first is the elements and the last is a survey of impossibilities. The survey of impossibilities shows even more marked differences between the parallel versions than the section on the elements. As I have shown elsewhere, the variations found in this case make it safe to conclude that textual expansion must have been at work in this part of the discourse.[29] In fact the 大智度論, whose title has been reconstructed as the **Mahāprajñāpāramitopadeśa*,[30] explicitly reports that the list of impossibilities in the *Bahudhātuka-sūtra* has been subsequently expanded.[31] Once there is clear evidence for expansion in the last part of the discourse, it seems fair to conclude that variations in the first part of the discourse probably also result from the same tendency.[32]

So out of the three explanations for the differences in the list of the elements, the third explanation is the most probable, in that the description of the elements in the passage translated above would be the result of a gradual expansion. During oral transmission such a gradual expansion would be a natural occurrence, where the topic of a wise one's skill in knowing the elements could easily have attracted additional sets of elements that the reciters considered as being relevant to the theme of wisdom.

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[29] Anālayo 2012c: 273–278.

[30] Cf. Demiéville 1950/1973: 470 note 1 and Lamotte 1970: viif.

[31] T 1509 at T XXV 237a29 explains that "based on what the Buddha had said, the treatise masters further expanded by declaring [more] possibilities and impossibilities", 諸論議師輩, 依是佛語, 更廣說是處不是處. Lamotte 1970: 1525 note 1 suggests that this refers to the authors of the Abhidharma in particular, "le *Traité* a sans doute en vue les auteurs d'Abhidharma qui ont considérablement augmenté la liste des possibilités et impossibilités dressée par le Buddha."

[32] This would be in line with a pattern described by Bodhi 2010: xii, where the "training in wisdom, as an intellectual discipline, gave rise to the first great wave of Buddhist philosophical thought in the period following the demise of the Buddha", which paid "increasing attention to the analysis and classification of the factors of experience that served as the objects of wisdom. Specialist monks would have compiled ever longer lists of elements, proposing various schemes of analysis and classification."

Given that the present state of the discourse appears to be the result of an expansion of the list of the elements, it would of course be possible that even the list of forty-one elements in the Theravāda version is already an expansion of an even shorter presentation.

An indicator in support of such a hypothesis can be found in the case of the group of six elements (4): pleasure, pain, joy, sadness, equanimity, and ignorance. Once a list distinguishes between pleasure, pain, joy, and sadness, neutral or equanimous feeling would naturally fall into place as a fifth. The sixth item of ignorance, however, seems out of place in what otherwise is a list of different types of affective tones. Nevertheless, a firm conclusion does not seem possible, since the comparative study of the parallel versions has not brought to light an exposition of the elements that does not mention ignorance as part of this group of six elements.

The full set of sixty-two elements found in the *Dharmaskandha*, however, clearly seems to be the result of amplification. The tendency towards expansion makes itself felt in the version of the discourse quoted in the *Dharmaskandha* in yet another way. Even though all versions, including the *Dharmaskandha*, agree on mentioning as one of several alternative titles for the discourse that it expounds four topics,[33] the actual discourse quotation in the *Dharmaskandha* has a fifth topic: the five aggregates (*skandha*). The exposition of this fifth topic in the *Dharmaskandha* reads as follows:

> A wise one who knows and sees as they really are the five aggregates is skilled in the aggregates. That is, one knows and sees the aggregate of bodily form, the aggregate of feeling, the aggregate of perception, the aggregate of formations, and the aggregate of consciousness as they really are. This is called being a wise one who is skilled in the aggregates.[34]

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[33] MN 115 at MN III 67,29: *catuparivaṭṭo*, D 297 *sha* 301a7 or Q 963 *lu* 330a8: *le'u bzhi pa*, T 776 at T XVII 713c27: 四品法門, T 1537 at T XXVI 502c17: 四轉, and D 4094 *ju* 33b3 or Q 5595 *tu* 36b5: *le'u bzhi pa*.

[34] T 1537 at T XXVI 502a13: 智者於五蘊如實知見, 是蘊善巧; 謂如實知見色蘊, 受蘊, 想蘊, 行蘊, 識蘊. 是名智者於蘊善巧.

The aggregates also occur in the quotation found in the *Abhidharma-kośopāyikā-ṭīkā*, where the *skandha*s are the first item in the exposition. The *Dharmaskandha* instead has the aggregates as its third topic. The discourse quotation in the *Abhidharmakośopāyikā-ṭīkā* merely mentions the "aggregates",[35] and thus does not have a detailed exposition of the type found in the *Dharmaskandha*. The fact that the other versions do not mention the aggregates at all, the different placing of the topic of the aggregates in these two versions, and the circumstance that the *Abhidharmakośopāyikā-ṭīkā* merely mentions the aggregates make it safe to conclude that this item must be a later addition.

Here it is also noteworthy that this apparent addition occurs in discourse quotations. The present case thus illustrates a basic tendency where textual patterns that are already at work in some early discourses tend to evolve further when discourses are preserved as quotations in other texts.[36] In the present case this further evolution creates to some degree a redundancy, as four of these five aggregates have already found inclusion as one of the groups of elements (5).

Now an addition of the five aggregates is only natural in a context that describes the gaining of wisdom, given the eminent potential that insight into the nature of the five aggregates has according to the early discourses.[37] Moreover, once the analyses into the elements and into the six internal and external sense-spheres are mentioned, it would be natural to add the five aggregates as another standard mode of analysis. The importance of these three sets can be seen, for example, in the Theravāda *Dhātukathā*, which employs the aggregates, the sense-spheres, and the elements as its basic scaffolding.[38]

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[35] D 4094 *ju* 29b1 or Q 5595 *tu* 32b1: *phung po*.

[36] For another case where a discourse quotation shows the influence of later doctrinal developments cf. Anālayo 2013d: 105f.

[37] Gethin 1992: 56 explains that especially "the practice of watching rise and fall with regard to the five aggregates of grasping seems to be particularly associated with the gaining of the insight that leads directly to the destruction of the *āsavas*, directly to awakening."

[38] This finds its expression in the recurrent question *katīhi khandhehi katīh' āyatanehi katīhi dhātūhi saṃgahito*?; cf., e.g., Dhātuk 1,23. Gethin 1986: 48 explains that "for

The choice of the aggregates in a discussion of the topic of wisdom is thus not surprising. Their inclusion in the *Dharmaskandha*'s version of the *Bahudhātuka-sūtra* is significant in so far as it throws into relief a tendency at work also in the exposition of the elements. This is the attempt to make the presentation as comprehensive as possible, through the bringing together and assembling, *saṃgraha*, of all items that are in some way related to the main topic of wisdom.[39] This is an important trajectory that from its roots in the early discourses becomes a central factor in the Abhidharma enterprise.

The same tendency towards comprehensiveness can also be observed in relation to the five aggregates themselves. Once the number five is established, it is of course no longer possible to add further aggregates. Yet, the tendency to bring together and assemble various items in an attempt to be as comprehensive as possible can find its expression in the definition of what each aggregate is held to include.

With the Abhidharma and later tradition, the fourth aggregate of formations becomes an umbrella category for assembling all those items that do not easily find an allocation under the other aggregates.[40] This differs from the original import of the fourth aggregate, which stood mainly for volitional formations.[41]

In the early discourses the analysis of the five aggregates appears to have had predominantly the function of drawing attention to those aspects of subjective experience that are prone to be grasped at and clung

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the *abhidhamma* texts … the *khandhas* form one of the primary category headings by means of which *dhammas* may be classified. Along with the twelve *āyatanas* and eighteen *dhātus*, the five *khandhas* constitute … three different methods of classifying the totality of *dhammas* that make up conditioned existence."

39 Frauwallner 1963: 34 points out that the attempt to cover and order all aspects of existence in a comprehensive manner is in line with a general tendency in classical Indian thought, found similarly in Sāṃkhya and Vaiśeṣika thought.

40 This tendency has already been noted by, e.g., McGovern 1872/1979: 87, Stcherbatsky 1922: 20, Rhys Davids 1936/1978: 324, Karunaratna 1979: 99, Bodhi 2000: 45, and Anālayo 2003: 205.

41 For a survey of the main nuances of the term *saṅkhāra* in the Pāli discourses cf., e.g., Hamilton 1996: 66–81 and Anālayo 2006c.

to, hence the standard reference to five "aggregates of clinging", *upādānaskandha*. This perspective to some degree is lost from sight with the attempt to fit all and everything into this fivefold analysis.[42] As a result, the fourth aggregate comes to stand for a broad variety of factors and thereby no longer functions as a pointer to the problem of identifying with and clinging to one's willpower and one's ability to take decisions and be in control.[43]

The tendency towards expansion of a topic appears to be in fact a general trait of the orally transmitted texts of early Buddhism. As part of this general tendency, the case of the *Bahudhātuka-sūtra* and its parallels reflects in particular an attempt to cover the topic of wisdom as comprehensively as possible by combining various teachings given on this topic into a single coherent whole. This appears to have led to an expansion of the list of elements in order to bring in as many different teachings on this subject as possible.

The same tendency towards comprehensiveness in matters of wisdom is also evident in the addition of the topic of the five aggregates in quotations of the discourse, and in the fourth aggregate becoming an umbrella term for anything that does not easily find allocation among

[42] Williams 2000: 89 explains that "in the immediate centuries after the death of the Buddha … even the five aggregates as simple unities were seen as obscuring a further dissolution, analysis into a plurality of further elements. This analysis rapidly came to embrace not just the psychophysical aggregates of a conscious being but also to include all things in the universe."

[43] Thus the *Dhammasaṅgaṇī*, for example, defines the fourth aggregate with the help of a long list of various mental factors and qualities, Dhs 17,32, after which it concludes by remarking that any other immaterial and conditioned qualities should be included except for the aggregates of feeling, perception and consciousness, *ye vā pana tasmiṃ samaye aññe pi atthi paṭiccasamuppannā arūpino dhammā ṭhapetvā vedanākkhandhaṃ ṭhapetvā saññākkhandhaṃ ṭhapetvā viññāṇakkhandhaṃ, ayam tasmiṃ samaye saṅkhārakkhandho hoti*. This clearly shows that the aggregate of formations has become an umbrella category for whatever does not neatly fit into the other aggregates. Definitions of the fourth aggregate in the *Dharmaskandha* and in the **Śāriputrābhidharma* introduce a distinction between formations that are conjoined with the mind, *cittasaṃprayukta*, and those that are disjoined from the mind, *cittaviprayukta*; cf. T 1537 at T XXVI 501b16 and T 1548 at T XXVIII 547b13. This also reflects a rather evolved understanding of the fourth aggregate.

the other aggregates. These instances point to a central task of the emerging Abhidharma: the providing of an ever more complete and precise map of the compass and significance of wisdom.[44]

2.2 The Term Abhidharma

Before turning to the nature of early canonical Abhidharma texts, in what follows I examine references to the term *abhidharma* in the discourses. Surveying the various instances in which the expression occurs gives the impression of a gradual development from "*abhidharma*" as something that is related to the Dharma to "Abhidharma" as an independent mode of thought and eventually a textual collection in its own right.

One type of occurrence in the early discourses involves the expression "*abhidharma* talk", *abhidharmakathā*. This expression occurs in the *Mahāgosiṅga-sutta*, which reads as follows:

> Two monks engage in *abhidharma* talk and ask each other questions. Asking each other questions, they answer without failing and their Dharma talk proceeds.[45]

The corresponding passage in a parallel to the *Mahāgosiṅga-sutta* found in the *Madhyama-āgama* reads as follows:

> Two monks who are teachers of the Dharma discuss the profound *abhidharma* with each other. They well comprehend and fully un-

[44] Agganyani 2013: 2 notes that from the viewpoint of tradition the "Abhidhamma … describes the full range of … human experience with all and everything. Studying Abhidhamma can be compared with studying a map."

[45] MN 32 at MN I 214,24: *dve bhikkhū abhidhammakathaṃ kathenti, te aññamaññaṃ pañhaṃ* (S^{e} omits *pañhaṃ*) *pucchanti, aññamaññassa pañhaṃ puṭṭhā vissajjenti no ca saṃsādenti, dhammī ca nesaṃ kathā pavattanī* (B^{e}: *pavattinī*) *hoti*, where the attribution of this statement to Mahāmoggallāna appears to be the result of an error in transmission; cf. Anālayo 2007: 27–29. Muck 1980: 19 notes that the context shows that "the fundamental outlook and concepts of what they [i.e., the two monks] were discussing were familiar to both. They surely cannot be discussing moot, difficult philosophical points, but basic, essential truths."

derstand the matters they ask [each other] about. Answering without hesitation they teach the Dharma and discuss it with agility."[46]

Another parallel preserved as an individual Chinese translation merely speaks of having a vision of the four truths without any doubt;[47] thus in this version the term *abhidharma* does not occur at all.[48]

In the *Mahāgosiṅga-sutta* and its *Madhyama-āgama* parallel the reference to "*abhidharma* talk" or to discussing the "*abhidharma*" occurs alongside "Dharma talk" or "teaching the Dharma". This gives the impression that the two terms Dharma and *abhidharma* are here interchangeable. In the *Mahāgosiṅga-sutta*, the prefix *abhi-* would thus convey the sense of "about" or "concerning" the Dharma. The passage would then describe having a talk "about the Dharma" and discussing "about the Dharma", *abhidharma*.[49]

The notion that the prefix *abhi-* conveys a sense of superiority appears to reflect a later understanding of the implications of the term. In line with later understanding, the commentary on the *Dhammasaṅgaṇī*, the *Atthasālinī*, refers to the present passage in support of the authenticity of the *Abhidharma-piṭaka* as the Buddha's word.[50]

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[46] MĀ 184 at T I 727b23: 二比丘法師共論甚深阿毘曇, 彼所問事, 善解悉知, 答亦無礙, 說法辯捷.

[47] T 154 at T III 82a12; a statement that occurs only as part of a summary of the earlier discussion among the monks, whereas the record of this part of the actual discussion appears to have been lost. For a discussion of the absence of the qualification "noble" found in this and several other early discourses preserved in Chinese cf. Anālayo 2006b.

[48] The same holds for another parallel, EĀ 37.3 at T II 710c5, which does not have a passage corresponding to this description at all.

[49] Norman 1983: 97 explains that "the word *abhidhamma* is found in the Vinaya-piṭaka and the Sutta-piṭaka, and seems in origin to be the preposition *abhi* together with the word *dhamme*, with the meaning 'as regards the *dhamma*'"; cf. also, e.g., Geiger and Geiger 1920: 118f, Horner 1941, van Zeyst 1959, Wynne 2004: 110 note 29, Gethin 2005: 10020, and Sujato 2009: 228–230. As pointed out by von Hinüber 1996/1997: 64, "the word *abhidhamme* occurs in earlier parts of the canon, but without any technical connotation simply meaning 'things relating to the teaching'. The commentary explains *abhidhamma* as 'higher *dhamma*', As 2,14."

[50] As 29,1.

A discourse in the *Aṅguttara-nikāya* describes a group of elder monks seated together "talking *abhidharma* talk".[51] In this case the *Madhyama-āgama* parallel does not employ the term *abhidharma* at all, but rather describes that these monks were "wanting to settle a matter of dispute, namely to discuss what is Dharma and Vinaya, what is the Buddha's teaching".[52] This case would be in line with the impression that *abhidharma* talk can simply stand for talk about the Dharma.[53]

Instead of the expression "*abhidharma* talk", the *Kinti-sutta*, of which no parallels seem to be known, speaks of a dispute about *abhidharma*.[54] The context shows that the reference here is to the seven sets, which in the *Kinti-sutta* have been listed just before,[55] an understanding confirmed by the Pāli commentary.[56]

Another type of occurrence of the term *abhidharma* in the early discourses tends to come together with the term *abhivinaya*. Such usage makes it fairly clear that the prefix *abhi-* will have to be understood in a way that works for both terms, in the sense of some more detailed exposition or commentary "about", *abhi-*, the Dharma or the Vinaya.[57] Here

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51 AN 6.60 at AN III 392,23: *abhidhammakathaṃ kathenti*.

52 MĀ 82 at T I 557c21: 欲斷諍事, 謂論此法律, 此佛之教.

53 Regarding another occurrence of the expression *abhidhammakathā* in AN 5.79 at AN III 107,4, Bodhi 2012: 1733 note 1086 comments: "I take the word *abhidhamma* here to have a purely referential function, that is, to mean 'pertaining to the Dhamma, relating to the Dhamma.'" A parallel to AN 5.79, found in T 1481 at T XXIV 957b25, does not employ the term *abhidharma*, nor is the term found in what has been preserved from this discourse in a Sanskrit fragment; cf. SHT IX 2772, Bechert and Wille 2004: 274. An exposition of the same topic in the Sarvāstivāda Vinaya, however, speaks of recitation of the discourses, the Vinaya, and the Abhidharma, T 1435 at T XXIII 359a17: 誦修多羅, 毘尼, 阿毘曇.

54 MN 103 at MN II 239,4: *abhidhamme nānāvādā*.

55 MN 103 at MN II 238,25.

56 Ps IV 29,3 explains that the term *abhidhamma* here stands for the seven sets, *imesu sattatiṅsabodhapakkhiyadhammesū ti attho*.

57 Cousins 2005a: 14 comments that when *abhidhamma* occurs "with *abhivinaya* it undoubtedly means originally 'concerning the *dhamma*.' Obviously, this is later extracted to give a name to an already prestigious (or aspiring) proto-*abhidhamma* literature."

abhivinaya might stand for the commentary that grew around the *prātimokṣa*, the *vibhaṅga*, a feature common to the various Vinayas.[58]

The Tens of the *Dasuttara-sutta* in the *Dīgha-nikāya* describe having a desire for the Dharma, delighting in hearing it, and finding exceeding joy in the *abhidharma* and the *abhivinaya*.[59] The sense of the passage would be to find joy in what is "about" the Dharma and the Vinaya or what "concerns" them. The parallel versions in fact just speak of the Dharma.[60]

The *Gulissāni-sutta* recommends that a forest-dwelling monk should apply himself to *abhidharma* and *abhivinaya*, explaining that otherwise he might not be able to reply to questions regarding these two.[61] Its *Madhyama-āgama* parallel recommends that the monk should train in explaining and discussing the Vinaya and the *abhidharma*, otherwise he will not know how to reply about these two.[62] In this way, what in the Pāli version is a reference to *abhivinaya*, in the Chinese parallel takes the form of the Vinaya.

The same pattern recurs in relation to a set of discourses in the *Aṅguttara-nikāya*. Whereas these mention "questions regarding *abhidhar-*

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[58] Watanabe 1983/1996: 26 comments that "*Abhivinaya* might actually refer to the *Suttavibhaṅga* or *Vinayavibhaṅga*, the old commentary on the *Pātimokkhasutta* which is incorporated in the *Vinaya* text (just as the *Abhidhammavibhaṅga* explains the *dhamma*)."

[59] DN 34 at DN III 290,13 (to be supplemented from DN 33 at DN III 267,26): *dhammakāmo hoti piyasamudāhāro abhidhamme abhivinaye uḷārapāmujjo* (B[e]: *uḷārapāmojjo*, S[e]: *oḷārapāmojjo*), which is the sixth in a set of ten qualities.

[60] Schlingloff 1962: 24,20: *dharmakāmo bhava(ti dharma)rataḥ so 'bhīkṣṇaṃ dharmam udāharati*; DĀ 10 at T I 57a12: 好求善法, and T 13 at T I 240b15: 喜聞法, 喜聞法行, 但樂數説法. The parallels to DN 33 do not have a counterpart to this quality. The reference to finding exceeding joy in the *abhidharma* and *abhivinaya* recurs in AN 10.17 at AN V 24,17, AN 10.18 at AN V 27,18, AN 10.50 at AN V 90,27, AN 10.98 at AN V 201,13, and AN 11.15 at AN V 339,2. The only parallel to these (i.e., to AN 10.17 and AN 10.18) is MĀ 95 at T I 577b2, which differs considerably and does not mention *abhidharma* or *abhivinaya*.

[61] MN 69 at MN I 472,5: *abhidhamme abhivinaye yogo karaṇīyo … abhidhamme abhivinaye pañhaṃ puṭṭho na sampāyati*.

[62] MĀ 26 at T I 455c14: 當學共論律, 阿毘曇 … 不知答律, 阿毘曇者.

ma and *abhivinaya*",[63] counterparts in the two *Saṃyukta-āgama*s speak of questions about *abhidharma* and Vinaya.[64]

When in these passages the term *abhidharma* occurs alongside the Vinaya, then this can easily give the impression that the term refers to a textual collection, the Abhidharma. In this way, a simple dropping of the prefix *abhi-* in the case of *abhivinaya* can substantially affect the meaning, as a discussion "about Dharma" and "about Vinaya" becomes a discussion of Abhidharma and Vinaya.

This shift in a way reflects what would have been the actual development. Just as out of the *abhivinaya* the Vinaya as a canonical text would have come into being, so out of *abhidharma* in the sense of discussions "about the Dharma" the type of thought would have developed that eventually became the Abhidharma proper as a collection in its own right.

The term Abhidharma in a developed sense occurs in several Chinese *Āgama* discourses, where the Pāli parallels do not have such a reference.[65] One such instance is a discourse in the *Ekottarika-āgama* that describes four great standards (*mahāpadeśa*) to evaluate the authenticity of a text. Such evaluation should be based on whether the text conforms to the discourses, the Vinaya, and the Abhidharma.[66] According to the Pāli parallels, the evaluation should be based only on the discourses and the Vinaya, without any mention of the Abhidharma.[67]

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[63] AN 3.137 at AN I 288,20, AN 3.138 at AN I 290,6, AN 3.139 at AN I 291,14, and AN 9.22 at AN IV 398,1.

[64] SĀ 917 at T II 232c9: 若有問阿毘曇, 律 (the same expression recurs in SĀ 918 at T II 233a23 and SĀ 919 at T II 233b28) and SĀ² 143 at T II 428b20: 若有問難阿毘曇, 毘尼 (the same expression recurs in SĀ² 144 at T II 428c26, with the corresponding text abbreviated in another parallel, SĀ² 145).

[65] In what follows I restrict my survey to occurrences in the Chinese *Āgama*s that have a Pāli parallel.

[66] EĀ 28.5 at T II 652b25 speaks of texts that "do not conform to the discourses, the Vinaya, and the Abhidharma", 設不與契經, 律, 阿毘曇相應者.

[67] DN 16 at DN II 124,9 and AN 4.180 at AN II 168,10; the same is the case for T 6 at T I 182c4 and T 7 at T I 195c11; for a comparative study of the four *mahāpadeśa*s cf. Lamotte 1947.

A version of these four great standards preserved in Sanskrit fragments speaks of the discourses, the Vinaya, and the *dharmatā*;[68] and a *Dīrgha-āgama* version lists the discourses, the Vinaya, and the Dharma.[69] While these versions do not mention the Abhidharma, it is easy to see how the last member of their threefold lists could turn into a reference to the Abhidharma.

A reference to the Abhidharma can also be found in the *Madhyama-āgama* version of one of the eight principles to be respected (*guru-dharma*) which according to the traditional account the Buddha presented as a precondition for granting the higher ordination to his foster mother Mahāprajāpatī Gautamī. According to this regulation, "if a monk does not give permission for a nun to ask questions, the nun cannot ask the monk questions about the discourses, the Vinaya, or the Abhidharma."[70]

These principles to be respected vary considerably among the different accounts of this event.[71] The listings of these eight in the Dharmaguptaka, Mahāsāṅghika, Mahīśāsaka, Mūlasarvāstivāda, and Theravāda Vinayas mention no prohibition on asking unauthorized questions.[72]

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[68] The fragments indicate that "they are not included in the discourses, they are not to be seen in the Vinaya, they go against the nature of the Dharma", Waldschmidt 1951: 238,19 (§24.6): *sūtre nāvataran(ti vinaye) na saṃdṛśyante dharmatāṃ ca vilomayanti*; cf. also Nett 21,32, which similarly mentions the *dhammatā* alongside the *sutta*s and the Vinaya.

[69] DĀ 2 at T I 17c6: "what has been said by him is not in the discourses, it is not the Vinaya and not the Dharma", 其所言非經, 非律, 非法.

[70] MĀ 116 at T I 606a16: 若比丘不聽比丘尼問者, 比丘尼則不得問比丘經, 律, 阿毘曇, a stipulation found similarly in the otherwise also very close parallel T 60 at T I 857a6 and in the Sarvāstivāda Vinaya, T 1435 at T XXIII 345c15.

[71] For surveys of these eight principles cf., e.g., Waldschmidt 1926: 118–121, Horner 1930/1990: 118–161, Hirakawa 1982: 49–95 (in the notes to these pages), Kusumā 1987/2010: 29–32, Nolot 1991: 397–405, Heirman 1997: 34–43, Hüsken 1997: 346–360, Heirman 1998, Chung 1999, Hüsken 2000: 46–58, Nagata 2002: 283–285, Cheng 2007: 83–100, Salgado 2008, Sujato 2009: 51–81, Anālayo 2010e: 82–86, and Hüsken 2010.

[72] The listing of the eight principles can be found in the account of the foundation of the order of nuns in the following Vinayas: Dharmaguptaka: T 1428 at T XXII 923a28,

Only the Saṃmitīya Vinaya takes up a related case, prohibiting a nun from asking a monk difficult questions.[73] Thus the Abhidharma is not mentioned in any of the Vinaya versions of this particular principle to be respected.



Figure 2.2 Mahāprajāpatī Requests Ordination

The relief shows Mahāprajāpatī Gautamī requesting permission from the Buddha to go forth in his dispensation.

Gandhāra, courtesy The Trustees of the British Museum.

The same holds for a version of this list of eight principles which occurs in a biography of the Buddha preserved in Chinese; this text only envis-

Mahāsāṅghika: Roth 1970: 17,1 (§13; cf. also T 1425 at T XXII 471b1), Mahīśāsaka: T 1421 at T XXII 185c20, Mūlasarvāstivāda: Schmidt 1993: 244,21 (the parallels are T 1451 at T XXIV 351a1 and D 6 *da* 102a6 or Q 1035 *ne* 99a8; cf. also the discourse quotations in D 4094 *ju* 212b7 or Q 5595 *tu* 242b6 and Wogihara 1936: 374,18), and Theravāda: Vin II 255,6 (= AN 8.51 at AN IV 276,22). T 1463 (毘尼母經) at T XXIV 803b12 just mentions the eight, without expounding them individually.

[73] T 1461 at T XXIV 670c11: "a nun cannot put difficult questions to a monk or teach a monk student", 比丘尼不得問難比丘, 及教比丘學.

ages that a nun could ask the community of monks about the discourses and the Vinaya.[74]

Another discourse in the *Madhyama-āgama* reports Śāriputra stating that it is possible to enter the attainment of cessation for those reborn in a particular heavenly realm,[75] whereupon another monk repeatedly contradicts him. Eventually the matter comes before the Buddha, who rebukes the other monk for engaging in a "discussion on the profound Abhidharma".[76] The Pāli parallel in the *Aṅguttara-nikāya* similarly reports the Buddha's rebuke, without any reference to the subject matter of the discussion being Abhidharma.[77] A Tibetan parallel preserved as a discourse quotation in the *Abhidharmakośopāyikā-ṭīkā* does have a reference to the Abhidharma, which in this case comes together with the Vinaya.[78]

The *Sappurisa-sutta* and its parallels list various qualities in relation to which one should avoid conceit. One such quality in a version of this discourse in the *Madhyama-āgama* is reciting the discourses, bearing in mind the Vinaya, and studying the Abhidharma.[79] The Pāli discourse and a parallel preserved as an individual translation in Chinese mention being learned or knowing the discourses, knowing the Vinaya, and teaching the discourses or the Dharma.[80] Neither has a reference to the Abhidharma.

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[74] T 196 (中本起經) at T IV 158c27: "she is permitted to ask the community of monks about matters related to the discourses and the Vinaya", 得問比丘僧經律之事. Precisely the same formulation recurs in T 1478 (大愛道比丘尼經) at T XXIV 946c12: 得問比丘僧經律之事; Heirman 2001: 284 note 48 quotes Hirakawa to the effect that T 1478 might be a Chinese compilation.

[75] For studies dedicated to the cessation attainment cf., e.g., Griffiths 1986/1991, Pieris 2003, Somaratne 2003 and 2006, and Stuart 2013.

[76] MĀ 22 at T I 450a18: 論甚深阿毘曇; cf. also T 2145 at T LV 72a13.

[77] AN 5.166 at AN III 194,18.

[78] D 4094 *ju* 69b5 or Q 5595 *tu* 78a4: "engaging in a discussion on the Abhidharma and the Vinaya", *chos mngon pa dang 'dul ba'i gtam bya bar*.

[79] MĀ 85 at T I 561b27: 誦經, 持律, 學阿毘曇.

[80] MN 113 at MN III 39,18 lists three separate qualities: being one who has heard much, *bahussuta*, being one who bears in mind the Vinaya, *vinayadhara*, and being a teacher

The same pattern recurs in relation to another *Madhyama-āgama* discourse, which reports the Buddha reflecting that he could give an exposition on the profound Abhidharma to a Brahmin visitor.[81] A reference to the Abhidharma is not found in a Pāli parallel, nor in another parallel preserved as an individual translation in Chinese.[82] The actual exposition given by the Buddha to his Brahmin visitor takes the form of a poem that describes an awakened one. Such a poetic exposition is not quite what one would associate with the term Abhidharma.

The Buddha's reflection that he could give an exposition of the profound Abhidharma recurs in another *Madhyama-āgama* discourse.[83] In this case, too, the parallel versions do not mention the Abhidharma.[84]

Another occurrence of the term Abhidharma can be found in the two *Saṃyukta-āgama* parallels to the *Mahāvacchagotta-sutta* of the *Majjhima-nikāya*. The two discourses report the Buddha reflecting that he would rely on the Abhidharma and the Vinaya when replying to the question a wanderer was about to pose to him.[85] The Buddha's reply

of the Dharma, *dhammakathika*. T 48 at T I 838b4 describes one who "knows and has heard the discourses, is able to teach the discourses, knows the Vinaya, knows [how] to understand the discourses penetratingly", 知聞經, 能說經, 知律, 知入通經.

[81] MĀ 161 at T I 688c21 reports the Buddha's reflection as follows: "I could teach him the profound Abhidharma", 我寧可說彼甚深阿毘曇.

[82] MN 91 at MN II 144,16 and T 76 at T I 885c2 do not record any such reflection by the Buddha.

[83] MĀ 134 at T I 634c28: "I could teach the profound Abhidharma", 我寧可說甚深阿毘曇.

[84] DN 21 at DN II 275,13, T 15 at T I 248a20, and T 203 at T IV 477a18 do report a reflection by the Buddha that motivated him to reply to the questions his visitor Śakra wished to ask, but in none of these versions does this reflection involve the Abhidharma. The beginning parts of such a reflection, also without a reference to the Abhidharma, have been preserved in SHT V 1421 R2, Sander and Waldschmidt 1985: 252; cf. also Sander 1987: 157. Another parallel, DĀ 14 at T I 64a13, does not report any reflection, but only indicates that the Buddha expressed his willingness to reply to questions by Śakra.

[85] SĀ 964 at T II 246b20: "I will now receive his [question] by relying on the Abhidharma and the Vinaya", 我今當以阿毘曇律納受於彼; and SĀ[2] 198 at T II 446a18: "I will listen according to Abhidharma and Vinaya to what he asks about", 吾當聽之, 若阿毘

then consists in a rather basic teaching on wholesome and unwholesome forms of conduct, again not quite what one would associate with the term Abhidharma.

The *Mahāvacchagotta-sutta* does not mention any such reflection,[86] only reporting that the Buddha announced that he could give teachings in brief or in detail. In its gloss on this passage in the *Mahāvacchagotta-sutta*, the Pāli commentary devotes some space to discussing the nature of brief and detailed expositions, in the course of which it mentions the seven works of the canonical Abhidharma as an example of teachings that, from the commentarial viewpoint, should be considered as teachings given in brief.[87]

If a similar comment had been found in the commentarial tradition related to the *Saṃyukta-āgama* versions, such a remark might then have influenced the wording of the discourse itself. Of course, in the absence of access to such a commentary this remains hypothetical. Nevertheless, other passages in the *Saṃyukta-āgama* do at times show the influence of commentarial glosses that appear to have become part of the actual discourse,[88] so it would not be surprising if the same should hold true for the present case as well. I will explore this topic in the next subsection of this chapter in more detail.

In sum, the basic meaning of the term *abhidharma* in those early discourses where such a reference is also found in parallel versions seems to be intending simply what is "about" the Dharma. This sense is to some

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曇, 毘尼, 隨其所問. For another occurrence of the term Abhidharma in SĀ 1249 cf. above page 21 note 24.

86 MN 73 at MN I 489,14.

87 Ps III 200,19.

88 For examples and a more detailed discussion cf. Anālayo 2010d, in which I also critically examine the assumption by Norman 1997: 158–160 that the commentaries were transmitted independently of the discourses, which would make it difficult for the one to influence the other. Such influence appears to reflect a recurrent pattern, already noted by Malalasekera 1928/1994: 89, who explains that "it sometimes happened that for a proper understanding of the text explanations of a commentarial nature were quite essential; and in such cases the commentary was naturally incorporated into the text and formed part of the text itself."

degree similar to the definition the term *abhidharma* carries in the Mahāsāṅghika Vinaya, where it stands for all of the nine *aṅga*s of the Buddha's teaching.[89]

Comparable to the development evident in the Vinaya accounts of the first *saṅgīti*, in some early discourses the Abhidharma begins to emerge as an entity in its own right. The instances surveyed above testify to an increasing use and popularity of the term, presumably reflecting the associations that the emerging Abhidharma evoked among the reciters. At times the use of the term is not yet well defined and seems somewhat accidental, such as when the Buddha delivers a poetic description of an awakened one to a Brahmin visitor, or when he decides to reply to questions by an inquisitive wanderer, a description that may have been influenced by a commentarial gloss.

2.3 Canonical Commentary

The tradition of accompanying a discourse during oral performance with a commentary must hark back to very early stages in the development of the Buddhist tradition. Such commentaries provide the audience with additional information on the circumstances believed to have led to the delivery of a particular teaching or else offer an exegesis of this teaching. During oral transmission, the more "historically" oriented type of commentary that gives information about the circumstances of the delivery of a teaching will naturally remain closely connected to the discourse on which it comments.

The same is not necessarily the case for an exegesis of a particular teaching. An explanation given in relation to one discourse on a certain topic can easily be used in the same way when another discourse on the same theme comes up for recitation. This would especially be the case for a commentary on recurrent topics of doctrinal importance. In this way, such a commentary can acquire a life of its own, in the sense of becoming increasingly independent from the discourse on which it originally commented. With the passage of time, it would not be sur-

[89] Cf. above page 17 note 9.

prising if out of a collection of more general commentaries an exegetical work in its own right came into being. This would explain the evolution of an exegetical tradition whose beginnings appear to be common to the different Abhidharma traditions.[90]

The basic tendency for early commentaries to acquire canonical status can be illustrated with examples from the *Sutta-piṭaka*. One such example would be the *Aṭṭhakavagga* of the *Sutta-nipāta*. In the Pāli canon this text is basically a collection of stanzas, and the background narrations that describe the occasions believed to have led to the delivery of these stanzas are in the Pāli commentary on this work, the *Paramatthajotikā*.[91] A Chinese translation of a parallel to the *Aṭṭhakavagga*, however, combines background narrations and stanzas into one.[92] Here the prose narrations have the same "canonical" status as the stanzas.

A commentary on the *Aṭṭhakavagga* has also acquired canonical status in the Pāli canon. This is the *Mahāniddesa*, which is found in the *Khuddaka-nikāya*;[93] modern-day Theravāda traditions are still in disagreement about the precise contents of this *nikāya*.[94] The *Mahāniddesa* does not provide background narrations comparable to the *Paramatthajotikā*, but instead offers an exegetical commentary on the significance of selected phrases found in the stanzas of the *Aṭṭhakavagga*.

An example illustrating the canonization of commentarial material would be the tale of the murder of the female wanderer Sundarī. The

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[90] According to Mizuno 1961a: 43, "(1) they annotated and explained the sutta texts and gave definitions and explanations of terminology. (2) They arranged and classified numerical doctrines according to numerals. (3) They systematised the doctrines preached in the suttas … these were the distinct characteristics of the earliest Abhidhamma."

[91] Sn 766 to 975 and Pj II 511,1 to 574,32.

[92] T 198 at T IV 174b8 to 189c23, translated by Bapat 1945 and 1950.

[93] Nidd I.

[94] On divergent conceptions of the contents of the *Khuddaka-nikāya* cf., e.g., Bode 1909: 4f (criticized by Duroiselle 1911: 120f), Ñāṇamoli 1962: xii, Abeynayake 1984: 33–46, Collins 1990: 108 note 11, von Hinüber 1996/1997: 42f, Norman 1997: 140f, and Freiberger 2011: 218; the inclusion of Nett in the B^{e} Pāli canon had already been noticed by Oldenberg 1882: 61.

story goes that, to discredit the Buddha and his disciples, other wanderers had told Sundarī that she should visit Jeta's Grove frequently. Then the wanderers killed her and buried her in Jeta's Grove, accusing the Buddhist monks of having taken their pleasure with her and then killed her.

This tale occurs in the *Paramatthajotikā* as a way of providing a background to the third discourse in the *Aṭṭhakavagga*.[95] The relevant section in the *Mahāniddesa* only alludes to the story as part of its word commentary, without giving it in full.[96] The third discourse in the *Aṭṭhakavagga* has a parallel in the third discourse in the Chinese parallel. In the Chinese version, the discourse begins with the tale of her murder, followed by the corresponding stanzas which come interspersed with prose.[97]

Besides being mentioned in other Pāli commentaries, the Sundarī tale has also acquired canonical status in the Theravāda tradition, as it is found in a discourse in the *Udāna*.[98] In the case of the *Udāna* in general, the situation is the reverse of that of the *Aṭṭhakavagga*. Whereas the Pāli *Udāna* collection combines its stanzas with prose that provides a narrative background, other *Udāna* collections consist for the most part only of stanzas.[99]

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[95] Pj II 518,15 to 523,16 (which also includes a word commentary, besides the narration of the tale), commenting on Sn 780 to 787.

[96] Cf. Nidd I 62,6 and Nidd I 64,1.

[97] T 198 at T IV 176b13.

[98] Ud 4.8 at Ud 43,23; commentarial references to the tale are Jā II 415,12 and Dhp-a III 474,5.

[99] The Sanskrit collection, attributed to Dharmatrāta, has been edited by Bernhard 1965 (on which cf. esp. Schmithausen 1970); the Tibetan translation by Vidyaprabhākara has been edited by Beckh 1911 and Zongtse 1990; a Chinese translation of an *Udāna* collection can be found in T 213 at T IV 777a2 to 799c4. For Tocharian and Uighur fragments cf. Sieg and Siegling 1931, Lévi 1933: 41–56, von Gabain 1954: 23f and 38–44, and Thomas 1971 and 1979. Commentarial material on the *Udāna* has been preserved in the *Udānavargavivaraṇa* by Prajñāvarman, which has been edited by Balk 1984. Parts of another commentary, the *Udānālaṃkāra* attributed to Dharmasoma, have been preserved in Tocharian fragments; cf. Lévi 1933: 72–77 and Sieg and Siegling 1933 and 1949.

An exception is an *Udāna* collection preserved in Chinese translation, which combines the stanzas with a word commentary comparable to the *Mahāniddesa*.[100] This *Udāna* collection does not report the story of Sundarī, however. Among the different *Udāna* collections the Sundarī tale appears to be found only in the Pāli collection.

In this way, the placing of the Sundarī tale in different texts illustrates how the same process of commentarial material acquiring a canonical status can occur in different ways in the Buddhist traditions. In the case of both the *Aṭṭhakavagga* and the *Udāna*, during oral transmission a collection of stanzas would have been accompanied by a commentary that reported the circumstances of the delivery of the stanzas and explained their significance.

At times, as in the case of the Chinese parallel to the *Aṭṭhakavagga* or the Pāli version of the *Udāna*, in the course of transmission the relationship between commentary and text became so strong that eventually the commentary became part of the text on which it commented.

The same is also evident in Vinaya literature, where the rules of the *prātimokṣa* are embedded in a prose commentary, *vibhaṅga*.[101] The prose commentary in the Theravāda Vinaya exhibits the same twofold features of providing a story, the *vatthu*, and an explanation of terminology, the *padabhājaniya*. The conjunction of text and commentary in this case has become so strong that the bare *prātimokṣa* is not found separately in the canonical Vinaya of the Theravāda tradition.[102]

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[100] T 212 at T IV 609c17 to 776a13; on T 212 in relation to the Pāli *Udāna* collection cf. Anālayo 2009a.

[101] Goonesekere 1967: 336 notes that “the development of exegetical activity can best be traced in the *Vinaya Piṭaka*. First, there were the rules or laws, the *Pātimokkha*, which had to be observed by the bhikkhus and bhikkhunīs. In the *Sutta-vibhaṅga* not only is a verbal commentary of the text of each rule given, but also an account of the incident which led to its promulgation.”

[102] In the words of von Hinüber 1996/1997: 9, “the Pātimokkhasutta is the only canonical text that has come down to us embedded in a second one, the second being its commentary.” The situation in the Theravāda Vinaya does not mean that the *prātimokṣa* is not canonical, pace Bronkhorst 1985: 315.

Other Vinayas similarly adopt the basic pattern of accompanying the individual rules with a commentary,[103] in addition to which they have their *prātimokṣa* also separately.[104] In this way, a combination of the *prātimokṣa* as the basic *mātṛkā* with its "commentary" is a common feature in the development of Vinaya literature in different traditions.

In view of this tendency of commentaries to acquire canonical status in the case of the *Sūtra-piṭaka* and the *Vinaya-piṭaka*,[105] it would be only natural for the same tendency to influence the genesis of the *Abhidharma-piṭaka* as well. In other words, just as the combination of the *prātimokṣa* with its commentary was central for the development of the Vinaya, so too the combination of *mātṛkā*s with a commentary was instrumental in the development of the Abhidharma. Thus the use of a *mātṛkā* together with its exegesis is a characteristic common to the Abhidharma and the Vinaya, whose expositions often take the form of a commentary on a summary list.

The part of the Vinaya that combines commentary with the *prātimokṣa* rules (the Vinaya *mātṛkā*) carries the title *vibhaṅga*. The same term *vibhaṅga* also serves as the title of a chapter (*varga*) in the *Madhyama-āgama* and the *Majjhima-nikāya*.

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103 Dharmaguptaka: T 1428 at T XXII 568c6 (*bhikṣu*) and T 1428 at T XXII 714a6 (*bhikṣuṇī*), Lokottaravāda-Mahāsāṅghika: Karashima and von Hinüber 2012 (*bhikṣu*) and Roth 1970 (*bhikṣuṇī*), Mahīśāsaka: T 1421 at T XXII 1a7 (*bhikṣu*) and T 1421 at T XXII 77b27 (*bhikṣuṇī*), Mūlasarvāstivāda: D 3 *ca* 21a1 or Q 1032 *che* 18b2 (*bhikṣu*) and D 5 *ta* 25b1 or Q 1034 *the* 25a6 (*bhikṣuṇī*), Sarvāstivāda: Rosen 1959 (*bhikṣu*) and T 1435 at T XXIII 302c15 (*bhikṣuṇī*).

104 Dharmaguptaka: T 1429 at T XXII 1015a18 (*bhikṣu*) and T 1431 at T XXII 1031a2 (*bhikṣuṇī*), Mahāsāṅghika: T 1426 at T XXII 549a7 (*bhikṣu*; cf. also Tatia 1975 for the Lokottaravāda version) and T 1427 at T XXII 556a23 (*bhikṣuṇī*), Mahīśāsaka: T 1422 at T XXII 194c3 (*bhikṣu*) and T 1423 at T XXII 206b23 (*bhikṣuṇī*); Mūlasarvāstivāda: Banerjee 1977 (*bhikṣu*) and D 4 *ta* 1b1 or Q 1033 *the* 1b1 (*bhikṣuṇī*), Sarvāstivāda: von Simson 1986 and 2000 (*bhikṣu*) and Waldschmidt 1926 (*bhikṣuṇī*).

105 Rhys Davids 1900/1922: xxvi notes that "we have the old Commentary embedded in the Vinaya and the Parivāra added as a sort of supplementary examination paper to it. Then there is the Niddesa, a whole book of commentary, on texts now included in the Sutta Nipāta … it is evident that commentary of different kinds had a very early beginning."

Although the discourses in this chapter in the two collections adopt an analytical mode of presentation that recurs in Abhidharma literature,[106] this does not turn such discourses into Abhidharma texts themselves.[107] Instead, they simply share with Abhidharma and Vinaya literature the basic procedure of combining a succinct statement of the *mātṛkā* type with its exegesis.

The first four discourses in the chapter on *vibhaṅga* in the *Majjhima-nikāya* offer an explanation of a poem on how one should best spend one's time. This does not seem to be the type of text that one would naturally consider to be related to Abhidharma.

The same holds for the next two discourses in the collection, which discuss karma and its fruit. The first of these two, the *Cūlakammavibhaṅga-sutta*, explains that killing others – provided one does not end up in hell for that – will make one become short-lived oneself. Hurting others leads to becoming sick, by being angry one will become ugly, by being stingy one will be poor oneself in the future, and so on (provided one is not reborn in hell instead).

The popular appeal of this simple correlation of karma and its fruit can be seen in the vast number of parallel versions extant for this discourse,[108] and in the fact that this description has inspired sculptural

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[106] Ronkin 2005: 30 notes that "the *Vibhaṅga-suttas* of the *Majjhima-nikāya* … are characterized by a catechetical style and are formulated as an exchange of questions and answers. An elaborate catechetical style is the hallmark of the *Kathāvatthu*, but a similar dialectical format also appears in several other Abhidhamma texts." Cox 1995: 10 points out that in the case of, e.g., the *Uddesavibhaṅga-sutta*, "the format closely resembles the method adopted by the *Paṭisambhidāmagga* and the *Vibhaṅga*, which are structured according to *uddesa*, or statements … and *niddesa*, or analytical exposition of those statements."

[107] Pace Buswell and Jaini 1996: 83, who refer to "the *vibhaṅga-sūtra*s, which constitute the second stage in the development of the Abhidharma"; cf. also Dessein in Willemen et al. 1998: 13: "the second phase in the development of *Abhidharma* literature are *sūtras* classified as '*vibhaṅga*'."

[108] MN 135 at MN III 202,11 to 206,31 has the following parallels, listed according to the language in which they have been preserved: Chinese: MĀ 170 at T I 703c21 to 706b10, T 78 at T I 887b4 to 888b10, T 79 at T I 888b15 to 891a12, T 80 at T I 891a17 to 895b20, T 81 at T I 895b25 to 901b18, and T 755 at T XVII 588c8 to 590b6; Khotanese: Maggi 1995; Sanskrit: Kudo 2004 (cf. also Kudo 2006a, 2006b, and 2007,

reliefs well beyond the Indian subcontinent, namely the panels of the Borobudur *stūpa* in Java.[109]

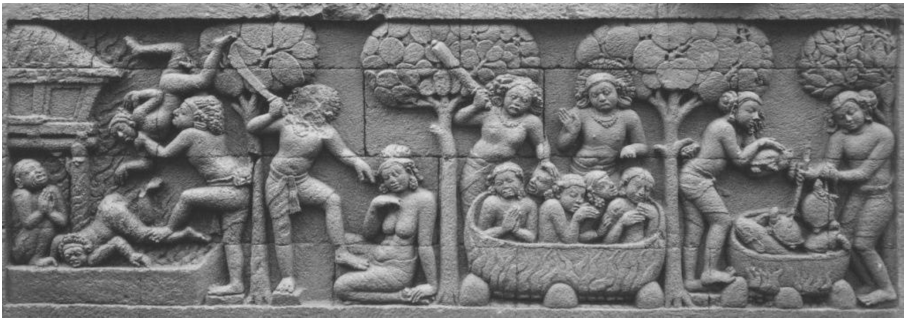


Figure 2.3 Punishment in Hell

The panel shows the terrible punishments in hell
that await those who perform evil deeds.

Borobudur, courtesy Volkenkunde Museum, Leiden.

Whereas karma is of course a topic covered in the canonical Abhidharma, the basic exposition shared by the *Cūlakammavibhaṅga* and its parallels would not fall under this category.

At the same time, however, some versions of the discourse build on this basic exposition in a way that would more easily fit the category of being an Abhidharma type of presentation. The case of the *Cūlakammavibhaṅga* thus neatly shows that it is not analysis in the *vibhaṅga* form itself, but how this at times proliferates which points to the emerging Abhidharma.

Hoernle 1916/1970: 48–50, SHT VI 1210, Bechert and Wille 1989: 5, and several as yet unpublished Schøyen fragments); Sogdian: Rosenberg 1920: 405; Tibetan: Lévi 1932: 183–214, D 339 *sa* 298b7 to 310a7 or Q 1006 *shu* 310b3 to 322a7; cf. also Simon 1970; Tocharian: Lévi 1933; cf. also Sieg 1938. No other discourse in the *Majjhima-nikāya* comes anywhere near having such an impressive number of parallels preserved in such a variety of languages.

[109] Cf., e.g., the study by Lévi 1937/1996.

The same is also evident in the exposition of the elements in the *Bahudhātuka-sūtra*, which shows that a basic driving force in the evolution of the Abhidharma proper is the wish to provide a complete map of all that is related to wisdom. I will return to the impact of the same tendency to expand lists in relation to the cultivation of meditation in the next chapter of my study.

2.4 Early Canonical Abhidharma

The *Bahudhātuka-sūtra* is one of several discourses quoted in the *Dharmaskandha*, which regularly presents excerpts from a canonical discourse, followed by an exegesis.[110] The *Saṅgītiparyāya* shares this close relationship to the early discourses, differing from the *Dharmaskandha* in being based on a single discourse, the *Saṅgīti-sūtra*.

The *Saṅgītiparyāya* also employs other discourse quotations in its exegesis of some of the doctrinal items that are listed in the *Saṅgīti-sūtra*.[111] This further underlines the close similarity between these two Abhidharma works, the *Dharmaskandha* and the *Saṅgītiparyāya*.[112] The

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110 Cox 1995: 32 explains that, unlike the *Saṅgītiparyāya*, "the *Dharmaskandha* is not structured as a commentary on a single *sūtra*, but rather contains excerpts from various *sūtra*s topically arranged with commentary on each. It begins each section according to a traditional *sūtra* format, recounting first the circumstances under which a particular discourse was delivered by the Buddha, followed by the contents of the discourse and a brief exegetical analysis of these contents." Dessein 2012: 149 similarly points out, regarding the *Dharmaskandha*, that "in a typical commentarial form, the text provides explanatory glosses on sections of *sūtra* passages, explanations that often result in an analysis that extends far beyond the *sūtra* passage itself … the methods of exegesis employed, however, are similar to those used in the *Saṃgītiparyāya*"; cf. also Dietz 1984: 18.

111 Cf. the survey in Stache-Rosen 1968: 218–220. Lindtner 1996: 204 in his study of the *Saṅgītiparyāya* describes the nature of the work as follows: "its manner of arrangement appears archaic … it is mechanical without any deeper formative principle", which would be a natural reflection of its basically commentarial nature.

112 Sakurabe 1993: 67f identifies the beginning stage in the development of Abhidharma to involve "an early stage of explaining, organizing and classifying the terms in the sūtras", which he sees exemplified in the *Saṅgītiparyāya* and the *Dharmaskandha*.

same two works also share the feature of being attributed to chief disciples.[113]

The *Saṅgītiparyāya* on several occasions refers to the *Dharmaskandha*, which at first sight seems to indicate that it would be the later of the two works.[114] However, it is also possible that these references only became part of the *Saṅgītiparyāya* during its translation into Chinese, as the *Dharmaskandha* was the first of the two works to be translated.[115] That is, the *Saṅgītiparyāya* may only be "later" in terms of when it was translated into Chinese.

These two works are generally reckoned to represent the earliest layer of the canonical Abhidharma literature of the Sarvāstivādins,[116] differing from later works of the same genre which no longer show such a close relationship to the discourses and which also do not place a comparable emphasis on originating from a chief disciple.[117] The close relationship of the *Saṅgītiparyāya* and the *Dharmaskandha* to the early discourses and their involvement with them quite probably reflects the dynamics at work during an early stage in the formation of Abhidharma thought.

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[113] Cf. below page 153 note 76.

[114] Takakusu 1904/1905: 99 comments on the *Saṅgītiparyāya* that "among the seven Abhidharma works it is posterior to none but the Dharma-skandha, which is frequently quoted in it, and must therefore be anterior to it"; for a survey of such quotes cf. Stache-Rosen 1968: 220.

[115] Cox 1995: 47 note 62 observes that "as Watanabe … points out, these references to the *Dharmaskandha* could have been added in the process of translation. Indeed, the *Dharmaskandha* was translated first by Hsüan-tsang in 659 A.D. and would have been familiar to Hsüan-tsang and his assistants when the *Saṅgītiparyāya* was translated from 660–663 A.D."

[116] Cf., e.g., Dessein 2012: 128 who notes that "the *Saṃgītiparyāya* and the *Dharmaskandha* definitely are the oldest of the *Ṣaṭpādābhidharma* works. These texts are organized according to a structure that is directly derived from the Sūtra literature, and they expose the doctrine that is presented in the *sūtra*s."

[117] Dessein 2012: 155 notes that with further developments the canonical Sarvāstivāda Abhidharma "shows a gradually more loose relation to a particular *sūtra* or set of *sūtra*s. The latter is also evident in the fact that later Abhidharma texts no longer are attributed to a direct disciple of the Buddha."

A comparable pattern appears to be evident in the early Abhidharma literature of other schools. The *Vibhaṅga* of the Theravāda Abhidharma regularly expounds a particular topic first from the viewpoint of the discourses, the *suttantabhājaniya*, followed by tackling the same theme from the viewpoint of the Abhidharma, the *abhidhammabhājaniya*. It is remarkable that the *Vibhaṅga* in this way quite explicitly draws attention to the difference in perspective between the discourses and the early Abhidharma.

The close similarity between the early Abhidharma works in their relationship to the early discourses can best be seen in the fact that the *Vibhaṅga* on several occasions draws for its expositions on the same type of discourse quotations as serve as the starting point for the exposition of these themes in the *Dharmaskandha*,[118] as well as in the corresponding section of the **Śāriputrābhidharma*, another early Abhidharma work that has been attributed to the Dharmaguptaka tradition.[119] The similarity between these works in their relationship to the discourses extends to the following topics:

– the four establishments of mindfulness (*smṛtyupasthāna*),[120]
– the four right efforts (*samyakpradhāna*),[121]
– the four bases for supernormal ability (*ṛddhipāda*).[122]

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[118] The correspondences between the *Vibhaṅga* and the *Dharmaskandha* have already been pointed out by Frauwallner 1964: 78 note 43.

[119] Bareau 1950; for a survey of various opinions on its school affiliation cf. Cox in Willemen et al. 1998: 164f. Regarding the school affiliation of T 1548, it is noteworthy that DĀ 21 at T I 91c5 has a reference to constantly enjoying seclusion which, as pointed out by Weller 1971: 240 note 177, does not fit the context and seems to be the result of a transmission error. The same reference recurs in a quotation of this discourse in T 1548 at T XXVIII 658a28. This makes it highly probable that the two works stem from the same transmission lineage; cf. Anālayo 2009b: 229 note 65. Several such similarities between T 1548 and T 1 have been noted by Karashima Seishi in the footnotes to the Japanese translation of the *Dīrgha-āgama*; cf. Karashima et al. 2000: 5.

[120] Vibh 193,2 (chapter 7), *Dharmaskandha*, T 1537 at T XXVI 475c26 (chapter 9), and the **Śāriputrābhidharma*, T 1548 at T XXVIII 613a11 (chapter 6 in the *apraśnaka* section).

[121] Vibh 208,2 (chapter 8), T 1537 at T XXVI 467c25 (chapter 7), and T 1548 at T XXVIII 616c9 (chapter 7 in the *apraśnaka* section).

In the case of the four absorptions (*dhyāna*) the same pattern holds, although here the length of the actual quotes differs. The *Dharmaskandha* begins directly with a discourse quotation that describes the four absorptions.[123] The *Vibhaṅga* and the **Śāriputrābhidharma* quote an extract from the standard description of the gradual path first, before coming to the same standard description of the four absorptions.[124] Even though the amount of text quoted from the discourses differs, the same basic pattern is at work here as well.

In this way, these early Abhidharma works from three different traditions seem to have grown out of a common nucleus, which appears to have been mainly discourse quotations on central themes of the type listed above, combined with a commentarial exegesis. Thus the Abhidharma, considered by tradition to encapsulate the highest doctrine and to represent the acme of Buddhist wisdom, appears to have had its humble beginnings as a commentary on the discourses.[125] What originally was merely "about", *abhi*-, the Dharma, eventually became the "superior" or "higher" Dharma, the Abhidharma,[126] thereby overshadowing in importance the texts on which it originally commented. I will return to this sense of superiority in the fourth chapter of my study.

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[122] Vibh 216,2 (chapter 9), T 1537 at T XXVI 471c14 (chapter 8), and T 1548 at T XXVIII 617a22 (chapter 8 in the *apraśnaka* section).

[123] T 1537 at T XXVI 482a29 (chapter 11).

[124] Vibh 244,2 (chapter 12) and T 1548 at T XXVIII 619c28 (chapter 9 in the *apraśnaka* section), followed at Vibh 245,5 and T 1548 at T XXVIII 620a3 by the standard description of the four absorptions.

[125] Mizuno 1961a: 43 notes that "the original Abhidhamma was a sort of commentary on the sutta." Warder 1961b: 52 explains that during the first period of transmission there was "no clear line of demarcation between the Canonical traditions and the Commentarial extensions of them". Locating the origin of the Abhidharma within the commentarial tradition would concord with a general tendency, noted by Deutsch 1988: 167, where "Indian philosophy developed historically … as a commentarial tradition."

[126] Horner 1941: 310 comments that "of one thing we may be certain, and it is that *abhidhamma* was never meant to oust *dhamma* from its pre-eminent position … rather it appears as accessory material to *dhamma*, supplementary to it." In the words of Rhys Davids 1910/1911: 62, "*Abhidhamma* has a relation to *Dhamma* similar to that of by-law to law."

3 Meditative Analysis and Omniscience

In this chapter I explore the theme of analysis in relation to meditation practice. The two meditation topics I take up are the analysis of the four noble truths, based on the relevant section in the *Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna-sutta* and not found in its Chinese parallels, and the analysis of absorption, based on a study of the *Anupada-sutta*, a discourse without parallels. Then I turn to the Buddha's awakening from the viewpoint of his cultivation of absorption and his realization of the four noble truths, and finally examine the notion that he was omniscient. My central interest in this chapter is the tendency of analysis to proliferate due to an attempt to provide a more comprehensive coverage, in the course of which new formulations and terms more typical of Abhidharma texts make their appearance in the early discourses.

3.1 The Analysis of the Four Noble Truths

The *Smṛtyupasthāna-sūtra* presents a series of exercises for the cultivation of mindfulness, covering the areas of contemplation of the body, feelings, mental states, and dharmas. The extant discourse versions are as follows, given according to their school affiliation:

- Sarvāstivāda tradition: a discourse in the *Madhyama-āgama*, preserved in Chinese translation;[1]
- Theravāda: two discourses found in the *Dīgha-nikāya* and the *Majjhima-nikāya*, extant in Pāli;[2]

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[1] MĀ 98 at T I 582b7 to 584b28, entitled 念處經, "Discourse on the Establishments of Mindfulness"; MĀ 98 has been translated by Minh Chau 1964/1991: 87–95, Saddhāloka 1983, Nhat Hanh 1990: 151–167, Kuan 2008: 146–154, and Anālayo 2013d: 269–286.

[2] DN 22 at DN II 290,1 to 315,14 and MN 10 at MN I 55,27 to 63,21, entitled *Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna-sutta* and *Satipaṭṭhāna-sutta*, the "Greater Discourse on the Establishments of Mindfulness" and the "Discourse on the Establishments of Mindfulness".

– uncertain school affiliation: a discourse in the *Ekottarika-āgama*, preserved in Chinese translation.[3]

The discourse versions of the *Smṛtyupasthāna-sūtra* show considerable variations,[4] especially in relation to the first and fourth areas of contemplation, concerning the body and dharmas. In the case of contemplation of dharmas, the *Ekottarika-āgama* version has two exercises, which are contemplation of the awakening factors and of the absorptions. The *Madhyama-āgama* version for this fourth *smṛtyupasthāna* lists three forms of cultivating mindfulness, which alongside the awakening factors cover the sense-spheres and the hindrances. These three are also found in the *Dīgha-nikāya* and *Majjhima-nikāya* versions, which include an additional two exercises: contemplation of the five aggregates and of the four noble truths. Listing the versions in order of increasing complexity, the topics of contemplation of dharmas described by them are as follows:

Ekottarika-āgama:	*Madhyama-āgama*:	*Dīgha-nikāya*/*Majjhima-nikāya*:
1) awakening factors	1) sense-spheres	1) hindrances
2) absorptions	2) hindrances	2) aggregates
	3) awakening factors	3) sense-spheres
		4) awakening factors
		5) noble truths

Compared to their Chinese *Āgama* parallels, the *Dīgha-nikāya* and *Majjhima-nikāya* versions present the most extensive conception of the compass of contemplation of dharmas. Not only that, but the otherwise similar Pāli versions differ substantially in relation to the last of their exercises for contemplation of dharmas, contemplation of the four noble truths. In view of the importance accorded to the four noble truths in various Buddhist traditions, it can safely be assumed that a reference to

[3] EĀ 12.1 at T II 568a1 to 569b12, which is the first discourse in the 壹入道品, "Chapter on the One-Going Path"; EĀ 12.1 has been translated by Huyen-Vi 1989, Nhat Hanh 1990: 168–177, Pāsādika 1998, and Anālayo 2013d: 286–295.

[4] Comparative studies of the different versions can be found in Schmithausen 1976, Bronkhorst 1985: 309–312, Sujato 2005, Anālayo 2011a: 73–9 and 2013d.

them would not have been removed, had it been part of the original exposition.[5] Thus contemplation of the four noble truths may well be an addition in the case of the *Dīgha-nikāya* and *Majjhima-nikāya* versions.

In fact, not only the Chinese *Āgama* parallels, but even the *Satipaṭṭhāna-vibhaṅga* in the *Vibhaṅga* of the same Theravāda tradition does not mention the four noble truths in its survey of *smṛtyupasthāna* meditation,[6] as is also the case for the corresponding sections in the *Dharmaskandha* and *Jñānaprasthāna* of the Sarvāstivāda tradition.[7] Only the **Śāriputrābhidharma* has instructions on the four noble truths as part of its exposition of *smṛtyupasthāna*.[8]

While probably a later addition, the four noble truths, being what according to tradition constituted the first teaching delivered by the recently awakened Buddha, would be a natural choice for inclusion in an exposition of mindful contemplation of dharmas. Such contemplation would inevitably have been influenced by the evolving significance of the term dharma in the Buddhist traditions, making it quite understandable if various doctrinal items of importance came to be included under this heading.[9]

The **Mahāvibhāṣā* quotes a statement from a discourse according to which all phenomena are included under the four *smṛtyupasthāna*s.[10]

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[5] Schmithausen 1976: 248.

[6] Vibh 199,12. Although Nyanatiloka 1938/1983: 39 and Thiṭṭila 1969: xlii seem to take this as a case of intentional selection, it needs to be noted that this would not conform to the procedure adopted elsewhere in the same work, where the relevant section from the discourses is quoted in full. Instead, in the words of Bronkhorst 1985: 311, it seems rather "that the 'Original Vibhaṅga' was composed before the 4 *smṛtyupasthāna* were given the explanations we now find in the Sūtras."

[7] T 1537 at T XXVI 478b23 and T 1544 at T XXVI 1023b29.

[8] T 1548 at T XXVIII 616b8: "he knows as it really is *duḥkha*, the arising of *duḥkha*, the cessation of *duḥkha*, and the path to the cessation of *duḥkha*", 如實知苦, 苦集, 苦滅, 苦滅道, which is followed by applying the same formulation to the influxes (*āsava*), 漏.

[9] On the term dharmas in the *smṛtyupasthāna* context cf., e.g., Franke 1915: 488, Gombrich 1996: 35f, Dessein in Willemen et al. 1998: 12, Anālayo 2003: 182–186, Gethin 2004: 520, and Ronkin 2005: 37.

[10] T 1545 at T XXVII 936c23.

The **Śāriputrābhidharma* formulates what would be the logical outcome of such an all-encompassing scope of the four *smṛtyupasthāna*s, namely that the fourth *smṛtyupasthāna* covers anything that has not been covered by the first three.[11] In this way the evolution of the conception of the fourth *smṛtyupasthāna* exemplifies a drive towards a comprehensive coverage of all items perceived as relevant, a drive that appears to have had a decisive influence on the evolving Abhidharma traditions.[12]

The actual instructions given in the *Satipaṭṭhāna-sutta* of the *Majjhima-nikāya* for contemplating the four noble truths are fairly brief, similar to the instructions given in the **Śāriputrābhidharma*. The *Satipaṭṭhāna-sutta* enjoins that a practitioner should understand *duḥkha*, its arising, its cessation, and the path:[13]

> Here, monks, a monk knows as it really is: "this is *dukkha*"; he knows as it really is: "this is the arising of *dukkha*"; he knows as it really is: "this is the cessation of *dukkha*"; he knows as it really is: "this is the path leading to the cessation of *dukkha*".

The *Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna-sutta* found in the *Dīgha-nikāya*, however, gives a detailed exegesis of each of the four noble truths, so that four lines of text in the PTS edition of the *Satipaṭṭhāna-sutta* become nearly ten pages (with considerable abbreviations) in the same edition's version of the

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[11] T 1548 at T XXVIII 615b29.

[12] Cox 1992/1993: 74 comments on T 1545 and T 1548 that "this expansion of the contents of the fourth application [*smṛtyupasthāna*] reflects the general purpose underlying the Abhidharma enterprise as a whole: namely, to provide a soteriologically coherent enumeration of all experienced phenomena." Harrison 2003: 119 notes that "the *smṛtyupasthāna* technique indicates that the practical and the theoretical are not so far apart after all, in that its object is … the perception of experience in terms of a prearranged set of categories and evaluations … Abhidharma is the detailed systematization of this act of analysis." Ronkin 2005: 119 explains that "the phrase 'seeing things as they really are' initially indicated 'comprehending the Buddha's teaching completely', that is, fully grasping the four noble truths. Later on it gained a stronger metaphysical bearing and began to signify 'understanding how things operate' and 'what is the case'. Finally the phrase was ontologically interpreted as 'knowing what there is'"; cf. also Martini 2011: 166 note 101.

[13] MN 10 at MN I 62,21 to 62,24.

Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna-sutta.[14] This is in fact the main difference between the two versions found in the *Dīgha-nikāya* and the *Majjhima-nikāya*, namely the extent to which they describe contemplation of the four noble truths.

The detailed exegesis in the *Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna-sutta* of the first and the fourth truths – *duḥkha* and the path to its cessation – can also be found in the *Saccavibhaṅga-sutta* of the *Majjhima-nikāya*.[15] This discourse and its parallels, attributed to Śāriputra, take as their theme the providing of an "analysis of the truths". The exposition of the first and fourth truths in the *Saccavibhaṅga-sutta* combines a short statement of each with a word-by-word explanation.

Comparison of the *Saccavibhaṅga-sutta* with its parallels brings to light that a *Madhyama-āgama* parallel and an individually translated discourse provide a different word-by-word explanation,[16] whereas an *Ekottarika-āgama* parallel has no such word-by-word explanation, but only the short statements of the first and fourth truths.[17] This gives the impression that an early version of this discourse may have only had such short statements, a condition still reflected in the *Ekottarika-āgama*. In fact the early discourses generally tend to present the four noble truths and the noble eightfold path in a summary manner; detailed expositions of the type found in the present instance are relatively rare.

In the present case, it seems that the commentarial type of explanation of the words used in these short statements came to be part of the exposition itself at some point during its transmission, resulting in dif-

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[14] DN 22 at DN II 304,26 to 313,27. The B[e] and S[e] editions of MN 10 also have this more detailed exposition, and in the case of B[e] this is already found in the fifth *saṅgīti* edition. This appears to be a replacement of MN 10 with DN 22, as B[e] gives the title of MN 10 as *Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna-sutta*; cf. also Trenckner 1888/1993: 534, who in the notes to his edition of this part of the *Majjhima-nikāya* comments that the Phayre manuscript of the India Office Library he consulted at this juncture "interpolates a passage of some length, borrowed from the Mahāsatipaṭṭhānasutta of DN".

[15] MN 141 at MN III 249,9 and 251,7; the exposition of the path (fourth truth) has another parallel in SN 45.8 at SN V 8,28.

[16] MĀ 31 at T I 467c2 and 469a15 as well as T 32 at T I 814c8 and 816a17.

[17] EĀ 27.1 at T II 643b18 and 643b22; translated in Anālayo 2006b: 148.

ferent explanations found in the *Saccavibhaṅga-sutta* or else in the *Madhyama-āgama* parallel and the individually translated discourse. In other words, comparative study suggests that the detailed exposition in the *Saccavibhaṅga-sutta* reflects later developments.

When it comes to the second and third truths, however, the *Saccavibhaṅga-sutta* only gives the standard definition of craving and its cessation,[18] without providing a more detailed commentary on these two.

Whereas the *Saccavibhaṅga-sutta* only presents a detailed commentary on the first and fourth item, the *Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna-sutta* has such a presentation for all four. Here is the exposition of the second truth in the *Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna-sutta*:

> Monks, what is the noble truth of the arising of *dukkha*? It is this craving which leads to further existence and is accompanied by delight and lust, delighting here and there, namely craving for sensual pleasures, craving for existence, and craving for non-existence.[19]
>
> Monks, when this craving arises, where does it arise; when it establishes itself, where does it establish itself? Whatever in the world is of a pleasing nature and an agreeable nature; when arising, it is there that this craving arises; when establishing itself, it is there that it establishes itself. What is of a pleasing nature and an agreeable nature in the world?
>
> (1) In the world the eye is of a pleasing nature and an agreeable nature; when arising, it is there that this craving arises; when establishing itself, it is there that it establishes itself. In the world the ear … in the world the nose … in the world the tongue … in the world the body … in the world the mind is of a pleasing nature and an

[18] MN 141 at MN III 250,32.

[19] The three types of craving – *kāmataṇhā*, *bhavataṇhā*, and *vibhavataṇhā* – are standard in expositions of the second truth in the Pāli discourses, but are not mentioned in *Madhyama-āgama* and *Saṃyukta-āgama* discourses, although the same is found in the *Dīrgha-āgama*; cf. the parallels to the *Saṅgīti-* and *Daśottara-sūtra*s, DĀ 9 at T I 50a21 and DĀ 10 at T I 53a25 (= DĀ 11 at T I 57c15), and the parallel to the *Mahānidāna-sūtra*, DĀ 13 at T I 60c13. The three types of craving are also mentioned in an *Ekottarika-āgama* discourse, EĀ 49.5 at T II 797c8; cf. also Choong 2000: 166, Delhey 2009: 69 note 4, and Anālayo 2011a: 70 note 216.

agreeable nature; when arising, it is there that this craving arises; when establishing itself, it is there that it establishes itself.

(2) In the world forms … in the world sounds … in the world odours … in the world tastes … in the world tangibles … in the world mental objects are of a pleasing nature and an agreeable nature; when arising, it is there that this craving arises; when establishing itself, it is there that it establishes itself.

(3) In the world eye-consciousness … in the world ear-consciousness … in the world nose-consciousness … in the world tongue-consciousness … in the world body-consciousness … in the world mind-consciousness is of a pleasing nature and an agreeable nature; when arising, it is there that this craving arises; when establishing itself, it is there that it establishes itself.

(4) In the world eye-contact … in the world ear-contact … in the world nose-contact … in the world tongue-contact … in the world body-contact … in the world mind-contact is of a pleasing nature and an agreeable nature; when arising, it is there that this craving arises; when establishing itself, it is there that it establishes itself.

(5) In the world feeling arisen from eye-contact … in the world feeling arisen from ear-contact … in the world feeling arisen from nose-contact … in the world feeling arisen from tongue-contact … in the world feeling arisen from body-contact … in the world feeling arisen from mind-contact is of a pleasing nature and an agreeable nature; when arising, it is there that this craving arises; when establishing itself, it is there that it establishes itself.

(6) In the world perception of forms … in the world perception of sounds … in the world perception of odours … in the world perception of tastes … in the world perception of tangibles … in the world perception of mental objects is of a pleasing nature and an agreeable nature; when arising, it is there that this craving arises; when establishing itself, it is there that it establishes itself.

(7) In the world volition in regard to forms … in the world volition in regard to sounds … in the world volition in regard to odours … in the world volition in regard to tastes … in the world volition in regard to tangibles … in the world volition in regard to mental ob-

jects is of a pleasing nature and an agreeable nature; when arising, it is there that this craving arises; when establishing itself, it is there that it establishes itself.

(8) In the world craving for forms … in the world craving for sounds … in the world craving for odours … in the world craving for tastes … in the world craving for tangibles … in the world craving for mental objects is of a pleasing nature and an agreeable nature; when arising, it is there that this craving arises; when establishing itself, it is there that it establishes itself.

(9) In the world thought of forms … in the world thought of sounds … in the world thought of odours … in the world thought of tastes … in the world thought of tangibles … in the world thought of mental objects is of a pleasing nature and an agreeable nature; when arising, it is there that this craving arises; when establishing itself, it is there that it establishes itself.

(10) In the world pondering on forms … in the world pondering on sounds … in the world pondering on odours … in the world pondering on tastes … in the world pondering on tangibles … in the world pondering on mental objects is of a pleasing nature and an agreeable nature; when arising, it is there that this craving arises; when establishing itself, it is there that it establishes itself.

Monks, this is called the noble truth of the arising of *dukkha*.[20]

The *Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna-sutta* continues by applying the same procedure to the third truth, depicting the cessation of craving by working through the same set of details. The analysis of the second and third truths described here is unique in the Pāli discourses. A description of the arising and establishing of craving in the *Saṃyutta-nikāya* employs similar phrasing, but it applies this only to the six senses, corresponding to the exposition found above in section (1).[21] The discourse does not take up the converse case of the cessation of craving (third truth) at all.

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[20] DN 22 at DN II 308,1 to 310,3 (for ease of reference, in my translation I number the subsections; the numbering is not found in the original).

[21] SN 12.66 at SN II 108,27 to109,5; the presentation in the parallel SĀ 291 at T II 82b16 is even more brief.

From the practical perspective of mindfulness training it makes sense to explain that craving for what is pleasing and agreeable can arise and establish itself in relation to each of the six senses (1) and the corresponding objects (2), or to consciousness (3) representing the mental experience of the sensory input. Once this much has been covered in mindfulness practice, however, it seems of less practical relevance to continue making the same point again and again as done in the *Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna-sutta*, directing mindfulness also to the fact that craving may arise in relation to the following aspects:

4) contact,
5) feeling,
6) perception,
7) volition,
8) craving,
9) thought,
10) pondering.

Stages (1) to (3) correspond to the standard presentation of the eighteen elements: the six senses, their six objects, and the six corresponding types of consciousness. Stages (4) to (7) appear to complement consciousness (3) with the remaining four aggregates, if contact (4) can be taken to represent the first aggregate of bodily form. Then follow craving (8), thought (9) and pondering (10).

Particularly notable is that with stage (8) the exposition proposes that craving arises and becomes established in relation to craving. From a practical perspective, I find it difficult to conceive of a meaningful form of mindfulness practice that contemplates this particular mode of the arising of craving.

Several scholars have already pointed out that the more detailed exposition of the four noble truths in the *Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna-sutta* appears to be an intrusion of commentarial exegesis into the discourse.[22] This

[22] Winternitz 1920/1968: 51 refers to DN 22 as an example for *Dīgha-nikāya* discourses that give the impression of being enlarged versions of shorter texts through the addition of commentarial type of material. Bapat 1926: 11f considers this part of DN 22 to be "an amplified version of an originally small sutta … explaining, in a commen-

detailed exegesis recurs in the *Saccavibhaṅga* of the *Vibhaṅga*.[23] The driving force behind such a detailed analysis appears to be the attempt to cover the topic of craving in such a manner that any minor aspect whatsoever is included. In this way, the simple indication: "this is the arising of *duḥkha*" has evolved into a detailed breakdown of all possible ways in which one might conceive of the arising of craving. While such a detailed analysis in a canonical Abhidharma work is not surprising, to find the same in the discourses is unexpected. A case that is to some extent comparable can be found in the *Anupada-sutta*, to which I turn next.

3.2 The Analysis of Absorption

The *Anupada-sutta* is a discourse in the *Majjhima-nikāya* of the Theravāda tradition of which no parallel is known. The discourse begins with the Buddha praising Sāriputta's wisdom in detail,[24] thereby broaching basically the same theme of wisdom as informs the *Bahudhātuka-sūtra* and its parallels. Following this praise comes a description of how Sāriputta contemplated various mental factors present in each of the four absorptions and in the first three of the immaterial spheres.

The *Anupada-sutta*'s description not only takes into account the mental factors specific to each absorption, but also lists a set of mental factors that are invariably present during any absorption. Here is a

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tarial fashion, the details of the four noble truths"; cf. also Barua 1971/2003: 369–371. According to Thomas 1927/2003: 252, during the oral transmission of the early discourses "there would also be the danger of unwittingly including discourses or commentaries … which were not an original part of the collection. An instance occurs in the case of the *Satipaṭṭhāna-sutta* … found in the *Dīgha* (No. 22) and *Majjhima* (No. 10), but in the former case a long passage of commentary on the Four Truths has been incorporated."

[23] Vibh 101,22; cf. also Paṭis I 39,32.

[24] MN 111 at MN III 25,5. A similar eulogy of Śāriputra's wisdom can be found in several discourses in the *Madhyama-āgama*; cf. MĀ 27 at T I 458b15, MĀ 28 at T I 461b10, MĀ 31 at T I 467b10, and MĀ 121 at T I 610b5, showing that the relationship between this disciple and wisdom is a common feature in early discourses from different traditions.

translation of the relevant section on the first absorption, which offers a detailed analysis that is unique among the Pāli discourses:

> Secluded from sensual pleasures and secluded from unwholesome states, with application and exploration, with rapture and happiness born of seclusion, Sāriputta dwelled having attained the first absorption.
>
> The states in the first absorption were determined by him one by one: application and exploration and rapture and happiness and mental unification and contact, feeling, perception, volition, mind,[25] desire, determination, energy, mindfulness, equipoise, attention. Known these states arose, known they remained, known they disappeared.
>
> He understood thus: "Indeed, in this way these states, which have not been, come into being; having been, they disappear." Not being in favour of or against these states, he dwelled being independent, without being bound to them, being freed from them, being released from them, with a mind that is without confines. He understood: "There is an escape beyond this."[26]

Reading the second paragraph can create a slight sense of awkwardness through the inconsistent use of the conjunction "and". This reflects an irregularity found in the original. The list of mental factors specific to each absorption in the *Anupada-sutta* employs the conjunction "and", *ca*, whereas the remainder of the list does not utilize any conjunction.[27] Here is the relevant passage in Pāli:

> *vitakko ca vicāro ca pīti ca sukhañ ca cittekaggatā ca*
> *phasso vedanā saññā cetanā cittaṃ chando adhimokkho viriyaṃ sati upekkhā manasikāro.*

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[25] S^{e} instead speaks of "consciousness", *viññāṇa*.

[26] MN 111 at MN III 25,12 to 25,24.

[27] This has already been noted by Rhys Davids 1900/1922: ix. The same pattern continues with the second and the third absorption. In the treatment of the fourth absorption, MN 111 at MN III 26,32, already the first part of the list includes mental factors that are not linked to each other by *ca* and that are not found in the standard description of the fourth absorption.

Thus while each of the first five factors comes with the conjunction *ca*, the rest come without it. Once a list of different items makes use of the conjunction "and", there would be no reason why it should suddenly stop using the same conjunction halfway through. This irregularity therefore suggests that the text combines two independent lists.

The part of the list of mental factors that does not employ conjunctions is similar to an Abhidharma type of exposition, where the use of conjunctions is often dispensed with. Another pointer to later influence can be found in the expression "one by one determination", *anupadavavatthita*, used in this part of the discourse. The term does not seem to occur elsewhere in the Pāli discourses, but only in later texts.[28]

The impression that the mental factors mentioned during the later part of the analysis of the first and other absorptions in the *Anupada-sutta* could be a later addition finds further support in an internal inconsistency, as occasionally factors are mentioned twice in the description of the same *dhyāna*. By way of illustration I translate the description of the third absorption:

> With the fading away of rapture, dwelling in equipoise with mindfulness and clear knowing, and feeling happiness with his whole being,[29] Sāriputta dwelled having attained the third absorption, which noble

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[28] Rhys Davids 1900/1922: viii considers MN 111 to be "an obvious patchwork", noting that the appearance of "two words – of *anupada*, and of *vavatthita*, 'determined' – which are not the old idiom, suggest a later editing and show us that when this editing took place, the period of the compiling of the naïf crude analyses of the Abhidhamma Piṭaka was either at hand, or not far removed in time." Nyanaponika 1949/1985: 55, commenting on the same occurrence, explains that "it is true that derivatives of the verb *vavattheti*, *vavatthita* and particularly *vavatthāna*, are found very frequently in later canonical books [such] as the *Paṭisambhidā-Magga* and the *Vibhanga*, and especially in the commentaries and the *Visuddhimagga*. But *vavatthita*, 'determined' or 'established', is likewise not such a highly technical term that the dating of a text could be based on that evidence alone."

[29] The instrumental *kāyena*, found in the description of the third absorption, is an idiomatic expression to convey personal or direct experience; cf. also Schmithausen 1981: 214 and 249 ad. note 50, Radich 2007: 263, and Harvey 2009: 180 note 10. My rendering of 身 in the descriptions of absorption below in note 39 is based on the assumption that this translates the same instrumental form.

ones declare to be one's happily dwelling with equipoise and mindfulness.

The states in the third absorption were determined by him one by one: (equipoise)[30] and happiness and *mindfulness* and clear knowing and mental unification and contact, feeling, perception, volition, mind,[31] desire, determination, energy, (mindfulness),[32] *equipoise*, attention. Known these states arose, known they remained, known they disappeared.

He understood thus: "Indeed, in this way these states, which have not been, come into being; having been, they disappear." Not being in favour of or against these states, he dwelled being independent, without being bound to them, being freed from them, being released from them, with a mind that is without confines. He understood: "There is an escape beyond this."[33]

In the second paragraph of the translation I have placed two terms in parentheses; these terms are not found in all of the editions I consulted. When they are found, they duplicate the terms I have put in italics. Thus in two editions equipoise is mentioned twice, in three editions mindfulness is mentioned twice. This refers only to duplications within the second paragraph, without taking into account the occurrence of these terms in the first paragraph, which corresponds to the standard description of the third absorption.

The same type of redundancy is even more evident in relation to the fourth absorption, where in all editions consulted equipoise and mindfulness are listed twice in the analysis of mental factors present in this experience.[34] For the purpose of analytical insight into the mental fac-

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[30] Not mentioned in B^e and C^e.

[31] S^e again speaks of "consciousness".

[32] Not mentioned in E^e.

[33] MN 111 at MN III 26,13 to 26,26.

[34] MN 111 at MN III 26,32: *upekkhā … sati pārisuddhi … sati upekkhā* (E^e both times: *upekhā*); Schmithausen 1981: 231 note 116 has already drawn attention to this doubling in the descriptions of the absorptions.

tors found in an absorption, there would be no need to list the same mental factor twice.

In addition to this doubling, a partial redundancy can also be found in relation to the description of the third and fourth *dhyāna*, as the listing of each of these absorptions mentions a particular type of feeling – pleasant feeling in the case of the third absorption and neutral feeling in the case of the fourth absorption – after which feeling in general is mentioned again.[35] Since in the third absorption only pleasant feelings are experienced and in the fourth absorption only neutral feelings are found, from a practical perspective it seems redundant if the general category of feelings is mentioned again.

These doublings further support the impression that the *Anupada-sutta*'s description of the mental factors present in each absorption is a combination of what originally were different lists. The list apparently incorporated in the later part of the *Anupada-sutta*'s description seems to reflect an Abhidharma type of analysis.[36]

It is instructive to compare the description of the four absorptions in the *Anupada-sutta* with the degree of analysis provided in early canonical Abhidharma texts. The *suttantabhājaniya* of the *Vibhaṅga*, the *Dharmaskandha*, and the **Śāriputrābhidharma* agree in taking their analysis only up to the level of detail reflected also elsewhere in the early discourses. Thus they are concerned with just those mental factors that are

[35] Schmithausen 1981: 231 note 116 points out this redundancy, found in MN 111 at MN III 26,17 (factor analysis of the third absorption): *sukhañ ca … vedanā*; and in MN 111 at MN III 26,32 (factor analysis of the fourth absorption): *adukkhamasukhā vedanā … vedanā*; a type of redundancy that recurs also in relation to the immaterial attainments, where the specific perception related to each attainment is followed by perceptions in general; cf. MN 111 at MN III 27,11: *ākāsānañcāyatanasaññā … saññā*, MN 111 at MN III 27,24: *viññāṇañcāyatanasaññā … saññā*, and MN 111 at MN III 28,4: *ākiñcaññāyatanasaññā … saññā*. In all of these cases, the doubling occurs within the factor analysis which comes after the standard description of these attainments.

[36] Adikaram 1946/1994: 24 mentions the *Anupada-sutta* as an example of the type of "material which may be considered as the main source of the later systematized Abhidhamma". Bodhi in Ñāṇamoli 1995/2005: 1320 note 1047 comments that "this minute analysis of mental states into their components anticipates the methodology of the Abhidhamma."

specific to a particular absorption. Here are the descriptions of the first and third absorptions from the *Vibhaṅga*:

> Secluded from sensual pleasures and secluded from unwholesome states, with application and exploration, with rapture and happiness born of seclusion, he dwells having attained the first absorption …[37]
>
> With the fading away of rapture dwelling in equipoise with mindfulness and clear knowing, and feeling happiness with his whole being, he dwells having attained the third absorption, which noble ones declare to be one's happily dwelling with equipoise and mindfulness.[38]

The descriptions given of the first and third absorptions in the *Dharma-skandha* and the **Śāriputrābhidharma* are similar.[39] The three works continue by providing word explanations for the terms used in the standard description of the absorptions, thereby highlighting the significance of the different aspects of these descriptions.

[37] Vibh 245,5 to 245,7; my use of "he" here (and in the translation of T 1548 in note 39) is based on the fact that the subject of the sentence is a *bhikkhu* (比丘), mentioned earlier.

[38] Vibh 245,10 to 245,13.

[39] T 1537 at T XXVI 482a29 (first absorption): "secluded from sensual pleasures and from evil and unwholesome states, possessing application and possessing exploration, with rapture and happiness born of seclusion, one dwells accomplishing the first absorption", 離欲惡不善法, 有尋有伺, 離生喜樂, 初靜慮具足住, and at T XXVI 482b4 (third absorption): "secluded from rapture one dwells in equipoise with right mindfulness and right knowing, experiencing happiness with one's whole being, which noble ones declare to be a suitable equipoise, one dwells accomplishing the third absorption," 離喜, 住捨, 正念, 正知, 身受樂, 聖說應捨, 第三靜慮具足住. T 1548 at T XXVIII 620a3 (first absorption): "secluded from sensual pleasures and from evil and unwholesome states, possessing [directed] awareness and possessing [sustained] contemplation, with rapture and happiness born of seclusion, he dwells accomplishing the first absorption," 離欲惡不善法, 有覺有觀, 離生喜樂, 成就初禪行; in the case of the third absorption the present passage in T 1548 abbreviates, but a full description can be found earlier in the same work at T XXVIII 602a1: "secluded from rapture dwelling in equipoise with mindfulness and knowledge, experiencing happiness with his whole being, he dwells accomplishing the third absorption, which as noble ones declare is one's happily dwelling with equipoise and mindfulness," 離喜, 捨行, 念智, 身受樂, 如諸聖人說, 捨念樂行, 成就第三禪行. For a comparative study of absorption descriptions in a range of texts, which show considerable consistency, cf. Meisig 1990.

In the case of the first absorption, seclusion from sensual pleasures and unwholesome states points to the need to overcome the five hindrances, so that the practitioner can experience the inner rapture and happiness that are "born of seclusion". Besides this shift from sensual pleasure to inner pleasure, a characteristic of the first absorption is the presence of *vitarka* and *vicāra*.

Although the term *vitarka* in general stands for "thought", in the context of absorption attainment I understand it to convey the sense of a directing of the mind that does not involve conceptual activity comparable to ordinary thinking and reflection.[40] Hence I adopt the rendering of *vitarka* as "application", instead of its more usual sense as "thought", and *vicāra* as "exploration", instead of "pondering".

In practical terms, a characteristic of the first absorption is the presence of some degree of mental application and its sustaining through exploration, which is needed to keep the mind in its concentrated condition. Once concentration deepens further, these will no longer be required.

In the case of the third absorption, its defining characteristic vis-à-vis lower absorptions is the absence of rapture, which results in an equipoise in which mindfulness and clarity of knowing become prominent features of the mind, all the while being accompanied by a profound happiness that pervades the whole being of the meditator.

Awareness of the central aspects that characterize these experiences serves a practical purpose, as it enables a clear recognition of the factors that are to be cultivated and of those that need to be left behind. Such a degree of analysis would also be sufficient for the development of insight, since to single out central mental components of an absorption experience suffices as a basis for developing insight into the condi-

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[40] Cousins 1992: 139 relates *vitarka* to "the activity of bringing different objects into firm focus before the mind's eye – be those objects thoughts or mental pictures." Shankman 2008: 40 points out that *vitarka* and *vicāra* as qualities of the first absorption "should never be understood as thinking or musing in the ordinary sense"; cf. in more detail Anālayo 2013b. The position that the first absorption involves the presence of conceptual thought, however, is taken by Griffiths 1983: 60, Stuart-Fox 1989: 82, and Bucknell 1993: 397.

tioned, impermanent, unsatisfactory, and not-self nature of such experiences. Thus, from a practical perspective, awareness of the absorption factors specific to any absorption would be enough as a basis for the development of tranquillity and insight.

The mental factors listed in what appears to be a later addition to the *Anupada-sutta*'s treatment of the absorption factors – contact, feeling, perception, volition, mind, desire, decision, energy, mindfulness, equanimity, and attention – are invariably present in each of the four absorptions. By including these factors within the scope of Sāriputta's insight contemplation, the *Anupada-sutta*'s treatment shifts from what is of direct practical concern to what is of more general interest.[41]

Such a shift from immediate practical needs to a detailed description is symptomatic of the Abhidharma taxonomy, which attempts to give an account of mind and matter that is as exhaustive as possible.[42] Comparable attempts to arrive at a more comprehensive list of the mental factors present in the first absorption can in fact be found in the *Dhammasaṅgaṇī*, the *Dharmaskandha*, and the **Śāriputrābhidharma*.[43]

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[41] Deleanu 2006: 516 note 127 comments that "as far as the *Anupadasutta* is concerned, it also shows an Abhidharmic approach. From the standpoint of spiritual cultivation, it is enough to know the *main* factors characterising the first *jhāna*. A list comprising *all* mental factors of a meditative state betrays theoretical interests rather than practical concerns."

[42] According to van Zeyst 1961: 43, "in the suttas the doctrine is given with a practical purpose, the development of morality, of insight, the attainment of realisation. In the Abhidhamma the preacher has been replaced by the scholar, whose main interests are definitions, technical determinations, analytical knowledge and synthetic logic." Mizuno 1961a: 43 explains that mind and matter "in early Buddhism … were explained only as far as they had any connection with practice and emancipation. But here they came to be examined as a whole … and there arose the method of classification unique to the Abhidhamma." Behind this difference stands a shift of interest; according to Piatigorsky 1984: 8 "in the Suttas one is urged, taught or otherwise instructed how to form the conscious experience of one's life, in Abhidhamma it is the conscious experience itself which is exposed, categorized and classified to be thought of, meditated on, memorized and recollected *as such*."

[43] Dhs 31,5 (abbreviated), T 1537 at T XXVI 483c28, and T 1548 at T XXVIII 621c13. This list in the *Dhammasaṅgaṇī* is not a closed list, since it concludes by referring to whatever other immaterial and dependently arisen states are present at this time; cf.

The report in the *Anupada-sutta* that Sāriputta determined the mental states of each absorption one by one endows the Abhidharma approach to analysis with the prestigious authority of having been the actual form of meditation practice undertaken by the disciple whom the early tradition reckoned as outstanding for his wisdom.[44]



Figure 3.1 The Stūpa of Śāriputra

The stūpa held to be of Śāriputra, a witness to the cult of this chief disciple and thus an expression of the high regard accorded to him by tradition.

Nālandā, courtesy Namit Arora.

In this way, the *Anupada-sutta* clearly reflects the type of presentation that became prominent with the Abhidharma and testifies to the tendency of analysis to be invested with a value of its own. To borrow an image from a discourse in the *Saṃyutta-nikāya* and its parallel in the

Dhs 31,6. It is only with later texts that such descriptions take the character of a closed list giving a fixed set of states.

[44] On the role of Śāriputra in relation to the Abhidharma in particular cf. Migot 1952: 519–523 and Ray 1994: 133f. Xuánzàng (玄奘) reports that it was characteristic for followers of the Abhidharma to worship [the remains of] Śāriputra, T 2087 at T LI 890b13: 阿毘達磨衆供養舍利子.

Saṃyukta-āgama, the early teachings are like a handful of leaves.[45] In contrast, the present instance reflects an effort to go beyond the mere handful in an attempt to collect as many leaves in the grove as possible.

The *Atthasālinī* makes this point quite explicitly in its defence of the value and importance of the Abhidharma. According to its explanation, Abhidharma is what exceeds and is distinct from the Dharma taught in the discourses. In relation to a range of topics covering central early Buddhist doctrines or mental qualities, the *Atthasālinī* considers the analysis given in the discourses to be only partial, whereas the Abhidharma provides a full analysis.[46]

This succinctly describes a major trend in the Abhidharma enterprise towards exhaustiveness, towards giving a comprehensive inventory of all that there is.[47] At the same time it reflects an attitude that came to the fore with the fully developed Abhidharma, by the time of which the instructions given in the discourses were perceived as somewhat lacking and insufficient.

Similar to the instructions for contemplating the four noble truths in the *Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna-sutta*, the analysis of the absorptions in the *Anupada-sutta* reflects doctrinal concerns of the adherents of the emerging Abhidharma. Whereas both cases have grown out of an interest in meditative practice – the establishing of mindfulness and the attainment of

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[45] SN 56.31 at SN V 437,21 and SĀ 404 at T II 108a29.

[46] As 2,27: "The Abhidharma is so called since it exceeds the Dharma and is distinguished from the Dharma. On having mastered the discourse [method] the five aggregates are analysed in part, not totally. On having mastered the Abhidharma … they are analysed totally," *dhammātirekadhammavisesaṭṭhena abhidhammo ti vuccati. suttantaṃ hi patvā pañca khandhā ekadesen 'eva vibhattā no nippadesena. abhidhammaṃ patvā … nippadesato vibhattā*. This is followed by indicating that the same applies to the twelve sense-spheres, the eighteen elements, the four truths, the twenty-two faculties, the twelvefold causation, the four establishments of mindfulness, the four right efforts, the four bases for supernormal ability, the seven factors of awakening, the noble eightfold path, etc.

[47] Cox 2004: 5 explains that "in very simple terms, *abhidharma* attempts an exhaustive and systematic accounting of every possible type of experience in terms of its ultimate constituents."

absorption – the final results go beyond what other early discourses consider necessary for successful practice.

3.3 The Buddha's Awakening

According to the early discourses, the attainment of the absorptions and the gaining of insight into the four noble truths were central features of the path to awakening the Buddha himself followed. Independent of what historical value one wishes to assign to such descriptions, they do reflect the significance accorded by the early Buddhist tradition to the absorptions and the four noble truths. This can thus be used as a basis for comparison with the analysis of the absorptions and the four noble truths in the way this is depicted in the *Anupada-sutta* and the *Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna-sutta*.

The Buddha's pre-awakening cultivation of absorption is recorded in the *Upakkilesa-sutta* and its parallel. After successfully overcoming various mental obstructions, he is described as cultivating concentration of the following types:

1) with application and exploration,
2) without application but with a remainder of exploration,
3) without application and without exploration.[48]

This presentation involves a basic form of analysis whose focus is on the role of *vitarka* and *vicāra* in particular. The three stages distinguished proceed from the presence of both through an intermediate stage, in which the former has disappeared and the latter still persists, to the absence of both. Whether the stage where *vitarka* has been overcome but *vicāra* still persists is taken into account explicitly or only covered implicitly depends on the perspective taken in regard to the development of absorption.

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[48] MN 128 at MN III 162,14: *savitakkam pi savicāraṃ samādhiṃ bhāvesiṃ, avitakkam pi vicāramattaṃ samādhiṃ bhāvesiṃ, avitakkam pi avicāraṃ samādhiṃ bhāvesiṃ*, with its counterpart in MĀ 72 at T I 539b2: 有覺有觀定修學, 極修學, 無覺少觀定修學, 極修學, 無覺無觀定修學, 極修學.

The more common presentation by way of the four absorptions has a stronger emphasis on the affective tone that comes with deepening concentration and offers also a somewhat more detailed description of each level of absorption. The deepening of concentration described proceeds from the rapture and happiness of seclusion (first absorption), through the rapture and happiness of concentration (second absorption) and the happiness devoid of rapture (third absorption), to equanimity (fourth absorption).

This more affectively oriented perspective does not need to take into account the stage when *vitarka* has been left behind but *vicāra* still persists, as this stage still falls under the category of rapture and happiness related to seclusion. Although this level of concentration is more refined than the rapture and happiness of seclusion experienced when *vitarka* is still present, it still falls short of being the rapture and happiness of concentration experienced with the second absorption.

The above presentation in the *Upakkilesa-sutta* and its parallel instead focuses on the gradual appeasement of the need to apply the mind and sustain it on the object of concentration. Therefore the progressive deepening of absorption is formulated from the viewpoint of the presence or absence of *vitarka* and *vicāra*.

These two modes of describing absorption experience do not entail a substantial difference in regard to actual experience, but are complementary analyses of the same process of deepening concentration.

An account of the Buddha's cultivation of the absorptions that employs the more usual mode of presentation by way of the fourfold scheme can be found in a discourse in the *Aṅguttara-nikāya*. The discourse, which has no known parallel, depicts the Buddha's cultivation of the same nine successive concentration attainments as feature in the *Anupada-sutta*. The description makes it clear that this progression took place gradually and over an extended period of time.[49] The same is also

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[49] The various attainments are preceded by the phrase *aparena samayena*; cf., e.g., for the second absorption AN 9.41 at AN IV 441,8. This makes it clear that each attainment should be understood to have taken place during successive time periods; for a discussion of AN 9.41 in relation to the Buddha's awakening (and his passing away) cf. also Anālayo 2014b.

evident in the *Madhyama-āgama* parallel to the *Upakkilesa-sutta*, which explicitly indicates that the Buddha cultivated each of the different concentrations for days and nights.[50]

According to the *Aṅguttara-nikāya* discourse, what enabled the Buddha to progress from the first absorption to the second was the overcoming of *vitarka* and *vicāra*, and further progress to the higher absorptions took place by leaving behind first rapture and then happiness. The description confirms that, even in the case of the Buddha himself, basic awareness of the factors specific to a particular absorption was considered a sufficient degree of analysis for practical purposes. This was enough to enable him to recognize clearly the factors that are to be cultivated and those that need to be left behind in order to attain a higher absorption. Such a relatively straightforward degree of analysis clearly differs from the detailed scrutiny of the absorptions described in the *Anupada-sutta*.

Turning from absorption to the four noble truths, these feature prominently in what according to tradition was the Buddha's first teaching delivered after his awakening.[51] Now according to the different versions of the first teaching, the Buddha announced to his first five disciples that what he had to convey was something new that had not been heard before in the contemporary setting. It follows that from the perspective of the early discourses the Buddha's realization could not simply be couched in standard formulations taken from the ancient Indian soteriological and philosophical background. It is against this context that the function of the basic teaching of the four noble truths as a form of analysis emerges most clearly. This mode of presentation corresponds to a scheme

[50] MĀ 72 at T I 538c9.

[51] The argument raised by Bareau 1963: 180f (cf. also Bronkhorst 1993/2000: 107 and Dessein 2007: 22) against associating the teaching of the four truths with the first sermon is not convincing, as his study is flawed by the methodological problem of not taking into account all parallel versions; cf. in more detail Anālayo 2012a and 2013a. The similar position taken by Anderson 1999/2001: 55f, based on observations made by Rhys Davids 1935: 723, appears to be the result of a misunderstanding of the nature of the early discourses and the collections in which they are contained; cf. Anālayo 2012a: 28–31.

of medical diagnosis. Expressed in medical terms, the basic teaching of the four noble truths looks as follows:

disease:	*duḥkha*
pathogen:	craving
health:	Nirvāṇa
cure:	eightfold path

There is no firm evidence for the existence in ancient India of such a scheme in medical literature that predates the time when the Buddha lived.[52] This is not surprising, since extant Āyurvedic treatises stem from a later period. Some early discourses, however, explicitly compare the four noble truths to medical diagnosis.[53] This makes it in my view fairly probable that some such diagnostic scheme was known, even though this may have been in use only at a popular level.[54] The choice of an analytical scheme taken over from medical diagnosis would result in a mode of presentation that in the ancient setting could have been easily understood.

The use of such an analytical scheme for conveying the Buddha's awakening needs to be understood for what it is: a conceptual tool. The awakening itself would of course have been his realization of Nirvāṇa, corresponding to the third of the four noble truths, the cessation of *duḥkha*. This is the one truth that according to the parallel versions of the first sermon needs to be "realized".

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[52] This has been discussed in detail by Wezler 1984: 312–324; cf. also Oldenberg 1881/1961: 374 note 2, Har Dayal 1932/1970: 159, and Filliozat 1934: 301.

[53] SĀ 389 at T II 105a24 to 105b20 (translated in Anālayo 2011b: 23f), SĀ² 254 at T II 462c9 to 463a23, T 219 at T IV 802a16 to 802b20, a quotation in the *Abhidharma-kośopāyikā-ṭīkā*, D 4094 *nyu* 1b1 to 2b6 or Q 5595 *thu* 32b6 to 33b6, a quotation in the *Abhidharmakośavyākhyā*, Wogihara 1936: 514,27 to 515,2, a partial quotation in the *Arthaviniścaya-sūtra*, Samtani 1971: 159,6 to 160,7, and Uighur fragments, Kudara and Zieme 1995: 47–52; for a more detailed discussion cf. Anālayo 2011b.

[54] According to Zysk 1995: 149, "there is little doubt that the system of Buddhist monastic medicine and Hindu *āyurveda* derived from a common source. Contrary to the view accepted by most orthodox Hindus, the origin of this shared system of healing is to be found among the ancient communities of heterodox wandering ascetics, or *śramaṇas*."

With such attainment of Nirvāṇa, then, *duḥkha* would be fully understood (by having realized what goes beyond it), craving would be eradicated, the cessation of *duḥkha* would be realized, and the cultivation of the eightfold path would reach its consummation.

The success of a medical analogy to convey the Buddha's realization is reflected in the narrative account of the first teaching in the different canonical versions. The parallels agree that, on being taught this analytical scheme, one of the five former companions of the Buddha attained stream-entry,[55] whereby the Buddha had set in motion the wheel of Dharma.

Elsewhere the discourses regularly report the attainment of stream-entry taking place when the Buddha delivers a teaching on the four noble truths.[56] These passages give the impression that this basic degree of analysis, based on a medical diagnostic scheme, was regarded as sufficient for practical purposes, without a need for a detailed breakdown of the arising and cessation of *duḥkha* as described in the *Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna-sutta*.

In sum, the depiction of the Buddha's own attainment of the absorptions and of his insight into the four noble truths provides a significant contrast to the degree of analysis of the absorptions and the four noble truths advocated in the *Anupada-sutta* and the *Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna-sutta*. When evaluating this contrast, it needs to be kept in mind that Buddhist traditions hold that the Buddha awakened to omniscient knowledge.

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[55] In what follows I restrict my survey to the main canonical versions, given according to the language in which they have been preserved. Chinese: SĀ 379 at T II 104a9; T 110 at T II 504b7; EĀ 24.5 at T II 619b6; Mahīśāsaka Vinaya, T 1421 at T XXII 104c18; Dharmaguptaka Vinaya, T 1428 at T XXII 788b24; Sarvāstivāda Vinaya, T 1435 at T XXIII 448c14; *Kṣudrakavastu* of the Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinaya, T 1451 at T XXIV 292b29; the same is also reported in a version of the first discourse found as a discourse quotation in the *Dharmaskandha*, T 1537 at T XXVI 479c27. Pāli: SN 56.11 at SN V 423,13 (= Vin I 11,32). Sanskrit: Chung 2006: 94 (for a survey of Sanskrit fragments cf. also Chung 2008: 122f); *Catuṣpariṣat-sūtra*, Waldschmidt 1957a: 152,9 (§13.1); cf. also Chung 2006: 83; *Saṅghabhedavastu* of the Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinaya, Gnoli 1977: 138,6; cf. also Chung 2006: 83; *Mahāvastu*, Senart 1897: 333,18. Tibetan: D 31 *ka* 182a3 or Q 747 *tsi* 185b5; D 337 or Q 1003, Chung 2006: 94; and a quotation in the *Abhidharmakośopāyikā-ṭīkā*, D 4094 *nyu* 29a6 or Q 5595 *thu* 65b1.

[56] Hearing a teaching is one of the five occasions for attaining liberation; cf. in more detail Anālayo 2009c and also the comment below page 129 note 3.

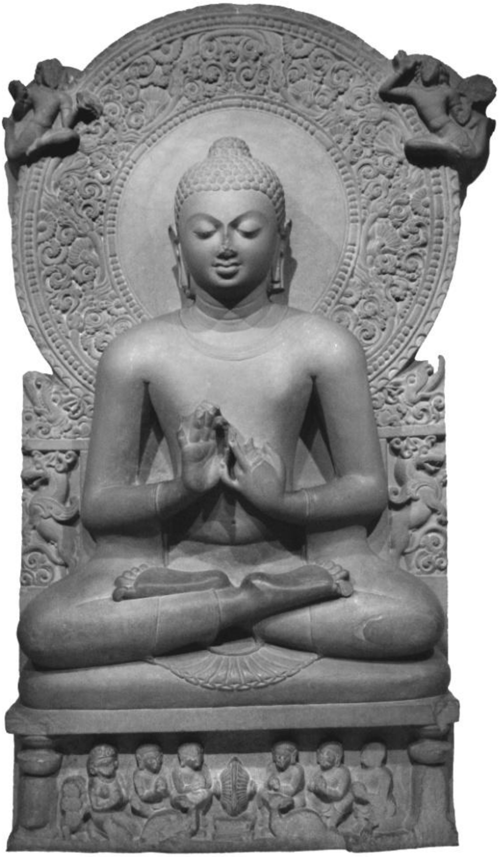


Figure 3.2 Turning the Wheel of Dharma

The relief shows the seated Buddha with his hands in the gesture of setting in motion the wheel of Dharma. Below the Buddha in the centre is the wheel of Dharma, with an antelope on each side, reflecting the location of the first sermon at the Mṛgadāva. The wheel is surrounded by the first five disciples, who listen with respectfully raised hands.

Sārnāth, courtesy Eric R. and John C. Huntington, The Huntington Archive at The Ohio State University.

In other words, even for reaching omniscience the relatively simple analysis of the absorptions and the four noble truths appears to have been considered sufficient, leaving little scope for arguing that more detailed analysis is needed for progress to awakening.

Placing the descriptions of the Buddha's own progress to awakening alongside the *Anupada-sutta* and the *Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna-sutta* reveals a trajectory that leads from a relatively basic and straightforward approach to detailed analyses concerned with minute details. While the employment of analysis in itself is an integral part of early Buddhist thought, the tendency for analysis to expand its scope and proliferate points to the emerging Abhidharma.

To be sure, the topics taken up in the *Anupada-sutta* and the *Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna-sutta* are rooted in meditation practice and experience. Their starting points are the attainment of absorption and insight into the four noble truths, central aspects of the path to awakening. Yet, with the detailed analyses presented in these two discourses, basic practical needs fade into the background. With this I am not intending to suggest that Abhidharma lists cannot become the basis of fruitful meditation practice.[57] My point is only that the approach to meditation practice that emerges from the early discourses is considerably simpler.

Although early Abhidharma analysis takes off from eminently practical concerns,[58] in the course of its trajectory such concerns tend to lead to analysis undertaken for its own sake.[59] One need not look far for the

[57] An example for fruitfully employing the lists and schemes of the developed Theravāda Abhidharma tradition in actual meditation practice is the system of meditation taught by the Pa-auk Sayādaw; cf., e.g., Catherine 2011.

[58] Gethin 1998: 209 explains that the "Abhidharma represents the theoretical counterpart to what the meditator actually experiences in meditation. It can be summed up as the attempt to give a systematic and exhaustive account of the world in terms of its constituent physical and mental events."

[59] According to Mizuno 1961b: 48, "it was a distinctive merit of the Abhidhamma that it systematically unified various doctrines of original Buddhism … but it carried with it some shortcomings … the abhidhammic studies gradually deviated from the practice of the path and became mere theories for their own sake." Tilakaratne 2000a: 21 comments that once "the Abhidhamma was perceived as … to be grasped only by the most intelligent … this new approach implies a shift of priorities. Original Buddhism

cause of this tendency: it lies in the attempt to be as detailed and comprehensive as possible. Once the task is no longer just to point out the way, but rather to provide a complete map of the whole territory to be traversed, there is inevitably a danger that the actual road to be taken might become buried under the amount of details provided.

The tendency in the Abhidharma traditions to attempt a comprehensive coverage of all relevant items stands in a close relation to the belief, shared by different Buddhist traditions, that the Buddha's awakening involved his gain of omniscient knowledge,[60] to which I turn next.

3.4 The Buddha and Omniscience

The establishing of a relationship between knowing all and awakening in general can be seen in a passage in the *Itivuttaka* and its Chinese counterpart. The two versions state that it is not possible to attain awakening without understanding and fully knowing "all".[61] Since in early Buddhist thought the awakening of an arhat does not require the attain-

was a 'soteriological' system in which the Dhamma was compared to a raft to be given up once it has served its purpose. The new situation was such that the very doctrine seems to have become an end in itself." According to Cox 2004: 4, "in its earliest stage, that is, as elaborative commentary, *abhidharma* was guided by the intention simply to clarify the content of the sūtras … in its final stage, *abhidharma* texts became complex philosophical treatises … whose purpose was the analysis and elaboration of doctrinal issues for their own sake."

[60] Agganyani 2013: 2 expresses the traditional belief as follows: "Abhidhamma stems from [the] empirical knowledge of the Buddha which he acquired by his full enlightenment."

[61] It 1.7 at It 3,28: "Monks, not understanding and fully knowing all … it is impossible to destroy *duḥkha*", *sabbaṃ, bhikkhave, anabhijānaṃ aparijānaṃ … abhabbo dukkhakkhayāya*. T 765 at T XVII 670a24: "Monks, you should know, without understanding all as it really is, without rightly having full knowledge of it … it is impossible to awaken, it is impossible [to attain] Nirvāṇa, it is impossible to realize the supreme peace", 苾芻當知, 若於一切未如實知, 未正遍知 … 不能等覺, 不能涅槃, 不能證得無上安樂. As Katz 1982/1989: 132 points out, regarding the Buddha being "'all knowing regarding spiritual matters' … in this restricted sense, the arahant is equally accomplished." Here and in what follows my discussion of omniscience is based on revised excerpts from Anālayo 2006a.

ment of omniscience, here the mention of "all" clearly refers to insight into the nature of all things, not to factual knowledge of everything.[62]

Other Pāli discourses use the term "all" in relation to the Buddha's awakening knowledge, where it appears to have the same sense. According to the *Ariyapariyesanā-sutta*, the recently awakened Buddha proclaimed that he had come to know all.[63] Parallels in the *Madhyama-āgama* and in the *Ekottarika-āgama* do not record any claim by the Buddha to knowing all.[64]

A discourse in the *Aṅguttara-nikāya* reports that the Tathāgata had awakened to all that in the world is seen, heard, sensed, and cognized.[65]

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[62] In the early discourses in general, the term "all" refers to what can be experienced through the six senses; cf., e.g., SN 35.23 at SN IV 15,11 and its parallel SĀ 319 at T II 91a28; cf. also Lamotte 1976: 1748 note 2. Kariyawasam 1990: 233 notes that from an early Buddhist perspective "*sabba* means the whole world of sense experience." Kalupahana 1992/1994: 43 similarly explains that "for the Buddha, 'all' or 'everything' represented the subject defined in terms of the six senses and the object explained in terms of the six sense objects." Nāgapriya 2006: 6 comments that in It 1.7 "knowing the 'All' (sabba) is equivalent to knowing the nature of the world (loka). It is a spiritual insight into the way things are." Guang Xing 2011: 192 explains that "the Buddha declares that he knows all about our world of experience and that without knowing this he would not be released from suffering."

[63] MN 26 at MN I 171,3: "I am one who has transcended all and known all", *sabbābhibhū sabbavidū 'ham asmi* (C[e]: *asmī*).

[64] MĀ 204 at T I 777b16 and EĀ 24.5 at T II 618c6; the term "all" does occur in MĀ 204, but only as a claim to being detached from all things, 不著一切法. A formulation similar to MN 26 can be found in *Udānavarga* 21.1, Bernhard 1965: 278, and in the *Mahāvastu*, Senart 1897: 326,5 (in this case even followed by *sarvajño*); cf. also Chakravarti 1930: 261 and for a Tocharian parallel Sieg and Siegling 1933: 170.

[65] AN 4.23 at AN II 23,28: "Monks, what in this world with its *deva*s, Māra, and Brahmā, among its population of recluses and Brahmins, *deva*s and humans, is seen, heard, sensed, cognized, reached, searched for, pondered over by the mind, all that the Tathāgata has awakened to. Therefore the Tathāgata is so called", *yaṃ, bhikkhave, sadevakassa lokassa samārakassa sabrahmakassa sassamaṇabrāhmaṇiyā pajāya sadevamanussāya diṭṭhaṃ sutaṃ mutaṃ viññātaṃ pattaṃ pariyesitaṃ anuvicaritaṃ manasā, sabbaṃ* (S[e]: *sammā*) *taṃ tathāgatena abhisambuddhaṃ. tasmā 'tathāgato 'ti vuccati*. The discourse continues by referring to the night of the Buddha's awakening with the verb *abhisambujjhati*, suggesting that the reference in the preceding sentence would be to the same realization. A comparable statement is found also in AN 4.24 at AN II 25,1; for a detailed study of which cf. Ñāṇananda 1974/1985.

According to its *Madhyama-āgama* parallel, the Tathāgata had awakened to and attained all that is completely right.[66]

In these two cases the statement found in the Pāli versions is formulated in such a way that it could alternatively be interpreted as a claim to omniscience. While the original import of the passages in the *Ariyapariyesanā-sutta* and the *Aṅguttara-nikāya* discourse seems to be that the Buddha had acquired penetrative insight in relation to all aspects of experience, it is easy to see how such formulations could be understood differently.

In fact the Pāli commentary on the *Aṅguttara-nikāya* takes the discourse to imply that there is nothing seen, heard, etc., by all beings that the Tathāgata has not seen, heard, etc.[67] That is, the commentary takes the formulation in the discourse to refer to factual knowledge of all that is seen, heard, etc.

According to another Pāli discourse, the Buddha explicitly denied having ever made a claim to omniscience, clarifying that to attribute such a claim to him amounts to misrepresentation.[68] No parallel to this discourse appears to be known.[69]

Another Pāli discourse which does have parallels records the Buddha declaring that there is no recluse or Brahmin who has omniscient

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[66] MĀ 137 at T I 645b16: "whatever there is that is completely correct, all that the Tathāgata understood, saw, realized, and attained", 若有一切盡普正, 有彼一切如來知見覺得; cf. also above note 65 the S^e^ variant *sammā* instead of *sabbaṃ*.

[67] Mp III 32,18 explains the import of the statement in AN 4.23 to be as follows: "Monks, what is seen, heard, sensed, and cognized by all these beings, there is nothing that is not seen, heard, sensed or cognized by the Tathāgata", *yaṃ, bhikkhave, imesaṃ sabbasattānaṃ diṭṭhaṃ sutaṃ mutaṃ viññātaṃ, tattha tathāgatena adiṭṭhaṃ vā asutaṃ vā amutaṃ vā aviññātaṃ vā n' atthi*.

[68] MN 71 at MN I 482,14: "those who speak like this: the recluse Gotama is omniscient and all-seeing, he claims to have complete knowledge and vision … they are not speaking what has been said by me, they are misrepresenting me with what is untrue and false", *ye … evam āhaṃsu: samaṇo gotamo sabbaññū sabbadassāvī, aparisesaṃ ñāṇadassanaṃ paṭijānāti … na me te vuttavādino, abbhācikkhanti ca pana maṃ* (E^e^ and S^e^: *man*) *te asatā abhūtenā ti*.

[69] Nevertheless, according to Warder 1970/1991: 137, "we ought probably to admit this *sūtra* as an authentic part of the earliest *Tripiṭaka*."

knowledge at once,[70] apparently in the sense that with a single state of mind one cannot know everything.[71] Counterparts to this statement in the *Madhyama-āgama* and in the *Bhaiṣajyavastu* of the Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinaya have the slightly different formulation that there is no *other* recluse or Brahmin who has omniscient knowledge at once.[72] This slight difference in formulation leaves open the possibility of making such a claim for the Buddha.

An *Ekottarika-āgama* discourse on Maitreya, which is without a parallel among the early discourses, reports that the Buddha understood all that is past, present, and future.[73] An explicit claim to omniscience can then be found in a *Madhyama-āgama* discourse, according to which Urubilvā Kāśyapa proclaimed in front of King Bimbisāra that his teacher, the Buddha, was omniscient.[74] A range of parallels to this episode do not record such a claim.[75]

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70 MN 90 at MN II 127,29 reports the Buddha stating that "there is no recluse or Brahmin who at one time knows all and sees all; this is impossible", *n' atthi so samaṇo vā brāhmano vā yo sakideva sabbaṃ* (E^e^: *sabbañ*) *ñassati sabbaṃ dakkhiti* (E^e^: *dakkhīti*), *n' etaṃ ṭhānaṃ vijjatī ti*.

71 Ps III 357,2 explains that the expression in MN 90 means being able to "know and see all past, present, and future [events] through … a single state of mind", *ekacittena … atītānāgatapaccuppannaṃ sabbaṃ ñassati vā dakkhati vā*.

72 MĀ 212 at T I 793c6: "it has not been, it will not be, it also does not happen now that there exists another recluse or Brahmin who at one time knows all, at one time sees all", 本無, 當不有, 今現亦無, 若有餘沙門梵志一時知一切, 一時見一切. D 1 *kha* 88b1 or Q 1030 *ge* 81b6: "it is impossible, it cannot be, there is no possibility that another recluse or Brahmin knows all and sees all", *dge sbyong ngam bram ze gzhan gyis thams cad shes pa'am, mthong ba gang yin pa de ni gnas ma yin go skabs med de gnas med do*.

73 EĀ 48.3 at T II 787c4: "the Tathāgata … thoroughly understands all in the three times: future, past, and present", 如來 … 當來, 過去, 現在, 三世皆悉明了; the same statement recurs in T 453 (佛說彌勒下生經) at T XIV 421a8, which in fact seems to be the same discourse preserved in the Taishō edition as a translation by a different translator; cf. the discussion in Lévi and Chavannes 1916: 191 and in Legittimo 2010.

74 MĀ 62 at T I 497c29: "the Buddha has omniscient knowledge", 佛一切智. Another instance of a similar claim can be found in Th 722: "the omniscient and all-knowing victor is my teacher", *sabbaññū sabbadassāvī jino ācariyo mama*. Coomaraswamy 1936: 21 sees another affirmation of the Buddha's omniscience in DN 24 at DN III

The *Kathāvatthu* then states that the Buddha was omniscient,[76] and the Pāli commentaries even go so far as to refer to the Buddha already before his awakening as the "omniscient bodhisattva".[77] In a similar vein, the *Mahāvastu*'s description of queen Māyā's delivery speaks of the birth of the "omniscient one".[78]

According to the *Paṭisambhidāmagga*, the Buddha's omniscient knowledge was such that he knew everything past, present, and future.[79] An understanding of the Buddha's omniscience as including knowledge of the future is also reflected in an *Udāna* collection preserved in Chinese translation,[80] as well as in the *Yogācārabhūmi*.[81]

28,8. Yet, the discourse itself only reports the Buddha claiming that he knows the beginning, *agga*, and what goes beyond it. It is only the commentary which interprets this passage as a reference to the Buddha's omniscience, Sv III 829,32.

[75] Sanskrit fragment 399 folio 106V2f, Waldschmidt 1932: 17 (or Waldschmidt 1962: 350,1 (§27d.8)); Skilling 1994: 80,7; T 41 at T I 825c26; the Dharmaguptaka Vinaya, T 1428 at T XXII 797c22; the *Mahāvastu*, Senart 1897: 446,3; the *Saṅghabhedavastu*, Gnoli 1977: 156,22; and the Theravāda Vinaya, Vin I 36,32; for further parallels cf. Skilling 1997: 267–275.

[76] Kv 228,24 qualifies the Buddha as "all-knowing, all-seeing", *sabbaññū sabbadassāvī*. According to Jayatilleke 1963/1980: 380f, the "attitude of not claiming omniscience for the Buddha seems to have been maintained right up to the time when the Vibhaṅga was composed, for this book gives the most elaborate account of the ten cognitive powers of the Buddha … with no mention of his alleged omniscience." He concludes that "omniscience is claimed for the Buddha by disciples far removed in time from the Buddha himself … [in] the very latest stratum in the Pāli Canon and that is even after most of the books of the Abhidhamma had been completed."

[77] Ps II 135,21 speaks of the *sabbaññubodhisatta*, in contrast to the *paccekabodhisatta*.

[78] The *Mahāvastu* states that "the omniscient one is born", Senart 1890: 21,16: *sarvajñaḥ jāyate*, a reference that would not be meant literally, as just a little later in the same work the bodhisattva refers to his omniscience as a future event: "I shall become omniscient, all-seeing", Senart 1890: 22,5: *sarvajño sarvadarśāvī bhaviṣyaṃ*.

[79] Paṭis I 131,9 describes that through his omniscience the Buddha "knows completely all that is conditioned and unconditioned … knows all that is past … all that is future … all that is present, thus is his omniscient knowledge", *sabbaṃ saṅkhataṃ asaṅkhataṃ anavasesaṃ jānāti … atītaṃ sabbaṃ … anāgataṃ sabbaṃ … paccuppannaṃ sabbaṃ jānāti ti sabbaññutañāṇaṃ*. Kariyawasam 2002: 142 comments that the position taken in Paṭis in regard to knowledge of the future "seems to depart radically from the *Nikāyas*".

[80] T 212 at T IV 760b26 indicates that "Buddhas … know the future", 諸佛 … 知將來世.

Such knowledge of the future is difficult to reconcile with the early Buddhist doctrine of conditionality, according to which what will happen in the future is conditioned, but not determined. Omniscient knowledge of the future would require that the future be predetermined.[82] Unlike knowledge of the past, knowledge of the future in its entirety would thus be impossible from the early Buddhist doctrinal viewpoint.

That the Buddha was not originally believed to have been endowed with complete knowledge of the future can also be seen in the background narrations given in the different Vinayas to explain what led to the promulgation of various rules for the monastic community. Again and again these narrations report that the Buddha changed an earlier ruling because this had led to unforeseen problems.[83] It clearly follows that, at the time these parts of the Vinaya came into being, the Buddha was not yet believed to have complete knowledge of the future.

The same also holds for the *Sandaka-sutta* and its Sanskrit fragment parallel. The *Sandaka-sutta* highlights the difficulties that arise for a teacher who claims to be omniscient when he has to explain any kind of misfortune that may have happened to him. He might go begging without getting anything, or take a road that leads to his being attacked by a wild animal, or else have to enquire after the name of a particular village and the way to reach it. On being questioned how such a thing could have happened, an omniscient teacher will have to resort to evasive ar-

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[81] T 1579 at T XXX 499a4: "time is of three types; one: the past, two: the future, and three: the present. Because of knowing as it really is in this way all elements, all matters, all categories, at all times, omniscience is so called", 時有三種: 一過去, 二未來, 三現在. 即於如是一切界, 一切事, 一切品, 一切時, 如實知故, 名一切智.

[82] Upadhyaya 1971: 276 notes that "the courses of future events … cannot be considered as wholly determined, and hence to speak of omniscience in relation to [the] future is to maintain an impossible position." Karunaratna 2004: 216 comments that "knowing everything in the future would admit of a doctrine that is pre-determinist in nature."

[83] Gombrich 2007: 206f points out that "the idea that the Buddha was omniscient is strikingly at odds with the picture of him presented in every *Vinaya* tradition". These "show that the Buddha … occasionally made a false start and found it necessary to reverse a decision. Since omniscience includes knowledge of the future, this is not omniscience"; cf. also the dilemma raised at Mil 272,18.

guments, maintaining that he had to get no alms, had to take that road, had to ask for the way.[84]

The Sanskrit fragment parallel envisages that such an omniscient teacher may fall into a pond, a sewer, or a cesspool, or even bang his head on a door, thereby further enhancing the absurdity of such a teacher's claim to omniscience.[85] The *Sandaka-sutta* concludes that to follow such a teacher is to embark on a spiritual life that brings no consolation.[86]

The criticism voiced in this discourse would be difficult to reconcile with events associated with the life of the Buddha, such as his ordaining of Devadatta,[87] or even his going begging without receiving anything.[88] Such events could only be explained by resorting to the type of evasive arguments criticized in the *Sandaka-sutta* and its parallel. So it seems that, similar to the Vinaya narrations, when the *Sandaka-sutta* and its parallel came into being, the Buddha was not yet considered omniscient.

In the course of time, however, it was probably unavoidable that omniscient knowledge came to be attributed to the Buddha.[89] In the ancient

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[84] MN 76 at MN I 519,22.

[85] SHT III 942 R3, Waldschmidt et al. 1971: 205: *palvalaṃ prapā[ta]ṃ syandanikāṃ gūtho[ḍ]igallaṃ*, R4: *kavātaṃ vā [ma]r[date]*.

[86] MN 76 at MN I 519,32: *anassāsikam idaṃ brahmacariyan ti*.

[87] This problem is taken up in Mil 108,11; for a discussion of the Buddha's omniscience in this work cf. Endo 1990: 163–166; on Devadatta cf. the detailed studies by Mukherjee 1966 and Bareau 1991.

[88] SN 4.18 at SN I 114,9, SĀ 1095 at T II 288a15, and EĀ 45.4 at T II 772b2.

[89] Warder 1970/1991: 135 reasons that "since other *śramaṇas* had made this claim, or had it made for them, it was perhaps natural that Buddhists should wish to set their teacher at least as high as anyone had suggested it was possible to get." According to Jaini 1974: 80, "in the face of the extraordinary claims of the Jains for their Tīrthaṅkaras, however, it is inconceivable that the eager followers of the Buddha could have long refrained from pressing similar claims for their 'enlightened' Master." Werner 1981/2013: 59 comments that since "claims of omniscience had been made in the time of the Buddha for other ascetic teachers … it is understandable that such a claim would eventually be made also for the Buddha." Naughton 1991: 37 suggests that probably "later statements attributed to him [the Buddha] where he appears to claim some form of omniscience for himself were interpolations created by disciples who felt uncomfortable comparing their teacher with Mahāvīra, who had claimed a literal kind of omniscience all along."

Indian setting, a claim to omniscient knowledge was made by the leader of the Jains.[90] The Buddhist texts reflect awareness of such a claim.[91]



Figure 3.3. Jain Tīrthaṅkara

The stele shows the first of the Jain Tīrthaṅkaras.
All Tīrthaṅkaras are believed to have reached omniscience.[92]

Vidiśā Museum, courtesy John C. Huntington,
The Huntington Archive at The Ohio State University.

A commentary on the *Ekottarika-āgama*, preserved in Chinese translation, explains that the Abhidharma has in particular the function of de-

[90] Dundas 1992: 29 notes that, according to Jain sources, Mahāvīra, "at the end of the thirteenth year after his renunciation … attained supreme and unique (*kevala*) knowledge, the omniscience which Jains regard as defining enlightenment." Schubring 1962/2000: 169 explains that such realization results in "cognition of all that is, was and will be."

[91] Cf., e.g., MN 79 at MN II 31,7 and its counterpart MĀ 208 at T I 784a16, which report Mahāvīra's claim to omniscience (a claim which MĀ 208 also attributes to the other five of the six well-known contemporary teachers).

[92] Dundas 1992: 18.

feating non-Buddhists.[93] Similar indications can be found in the *Vijñānakāya* and the **Mahāvibhāṣā*,[94] as well as in the *Mahāyānasutrālaṃkāra*.[95] These explanations point to the use of the Abhidharma as a tool in competition and debate with other groups in the ancient Indian setting.[96]

The same is also evident in the introduction to the *Saṅgītiparyāya* (as well as the *Saṅgīti-sūtra*), discussed above,[97] whose central purpose in leading to communal harmony is explicitly contrasted with quarrels that apparently broke out among the Jains after the death of their leader.

The elevation of the Buddha's realization to omniscience appears to have similarly been influenced by the need to match contemporary rivals, especially those who, like the Jains, had a teacher believed to be omniscient. Besides this parallelism, the basic tendency behind the evolving Abhidharma and omniscience is similar, in that both are about a comprehensive knowledge of all facts and details.

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[93] T 1507 at T XXV 34c22: "one who bears [in mind] the Abhidharma, however, can defeat outsiders", 但持阿毘曇者, 便可降伏外道.

[94] T 1539 at T XXVI 531a14: "the Abhidharma … is a sword [towards] wrong doctrines", 阿毘達磨 … 邪論劍. T 1545 at T XXVII 4a24: "because of its ability to defeat all outside doctrines the Abhidharma is so called", 能伏一切外道他論故, 名阿毘達磨. Ronkin 2005: 26 explains that "the Abhidhamma texts became a medium by which Buddhist masters developed their positions through the stimulating debate with non-Buddhist opponents"; cf. also Franco 2000: 558 who comments on the Spitzer manuscript, which "without doubt contained an Abhidharma work", that "one of the most remarkable features of the text(s) is frequent reference to non-Buddhist literature … and notably to the non-Buddhist philosophical schools of Sām[k]hya and Vaiśeṣika."

[95] The *Mahāyānasutrālaṃkāra* indicates that "the Abhidharma 'overpowers', because it overpowers the doctrines of others with regard to issues of disputations and so on", Lévi 1907: 54,21: *abhibhavati ity abhidharmaḥ parapravādābhibhavanād vivādādhikaraṇādibhiḥ*.

[96] Cox 1992/1994: 64 comments on the composition and transmission of Abhidharma texts that "a multiplicity of motives undoubtedly influenced these texts", such as "defending their canonical tradition vis-à-vis those of rival groups. Although modern scholars often regard these concerns as secondary to what are assumed to have been fundamental religious motives, we should not underestimate the actuality and immediacy of such concrete historical issues for the bearers of these traditions."

[97] See above page 47.

The *Atthasālinī* in its defence of the Abhidharma as the word of the Buddha states that one who refuses the Abhidharma thereby refuses the Buddha's omniscient knowledge. Such a person is engaging in one of the eighteen causes of a schism and should be chased away.[98]

This passage makes two significant points. One is the identification of the Abhidharma with omniscient knowledge. In other words, the attempt to provide a comprehensive coverage typical of the Abhidharma is seen as an expression of the comprehensive knowledge the Buddha was held to have gained through omniscience. The other point is the allusion to schism, the very opposite of the communal harmony that is the aim of *saṅgīti*, communal recitation. A person who questions the canonicity of the Abhidharma is such a threat to the community that his presence cannot be tolerated.

When seen from this viewpoint, it becomes clear that the Abhidharma follows a current that also informs the notion of the Buddha's omniscience. Both provide a feeling of security through conveying a sense of completeness. The completeness of understanding that the Buddha was believed to have realized through his attainment of omniscience then finds its counterpart in the comprehensive coverage offered in Abhidharma treatises.

The elevation of the Buddha to the position of an omniscient teacher and the attempt to develop a comprehensive map through the Abhidharma are interdependent. Both are to some degree a response to the emotional need of the disciples at a time when the teacher had passed away. They provide a sense of assurance direly needed in the struggle to ensure the survival of the fledgling community of Buddhist disciples in their competition with outsiders.

Moreover, both are a move back to common Indian turf: the one by placing the Buddha's liberating insight on a par with the claims made

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[98] As 29,21: *abhidhammaṃ paṭibāhento … sabbaññutaññāṇaṃ paṭibāhati … aṭṭhārasasu bhedakaravatthūsu ekasmiṃ sandissati … uyyojetabbo*. Bapat and Vadekar 1942: xvi drily comment that the author(s) of the *Atthasālinī* seem "to be quite aware of the objections, raised by some unorthodox sectarians, to include Abhidhamma in the Buddha's 'Word'."

by other contemporary teachers to have complete factual knowledge of all things; the other by presenting his teaching as a detailed inventory of all that is,[99] instead of being about letting go of whatever it may be.

[99] Ronkin 2005: 249 points out that "the doctrinal development of the Abhidhamma attests to its urge to turn the Buddha's radical legacy into a rather more commonsense worldview and supplement it with a metaphysical commitment of the kind which the Buddha deliberately refused to admit. For this end the Abhidhammikas were willing to make ideological concessions and accede to doctrines that may sometimes have imposed more meaning on the earliest Buddhist teaching than it originally had."

4 Awakening and the Authentication of the Abhidharma

My exploration in this chapter begins with the notion of the supramundane path in the *Mahācattārīsaka-sutta*, before turning to descriptions of the path in the early discourses in general. Then I take up parallelisms between the Abhidharma and the Mahāyāna in their attempt to be recognized as authentic records of the Buddha's word, and study the tale according to which the Abhidharma was taught by the Buddha to his mother during a sojourn in the Heaven of the Thirty-three. My main concern in what follows is the emergence in the early discourses of distinct Abhidharma thought.

4.1 The Supramundane Path

In early Buddhist thought, the path to awakening is of course the noble eightfold path,[1] which is considered an ancient path rediscovered by the Buddha.[2] This eightfold path is the "stream" that is "entered" with stream-entry.[3] Working out the precise relationship of the eightfold path to the attainment of stream-entry and higher stages of awakening is a topic dealt with only in the Abhidharma traditions, although such con-

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[1] On the significance of the path in Buddhist thought in general, Buswell and Gimello 1992/1994: 3f comment that "the intrinsic efficacy of mārga generally dominates the whole of Buddhism and leads it to privilege mārga in ways that other traditions do not. Thus many of the most characteristic features of Buddhism appear to derive from its emphasis on mārga."

[2] SN 12.65 at SN II 106,16 and its parallels in a Sanskrit fragment, Bongard-Levin et al. 1996: 80 (I.32); cf. also Lévi 1910: 440 and Tripāṭhī 1962: 103; and in SĀ 287 at T II 80c27, EĀ 38.4 at T II 718c6, T 713 at T XVI 827b7, T 714 at T XVI 828b21, and T 715 at T XVI 830a24.

[3] SN 55.5 at SN V 347,25 and its parallel SĀ 843 at T II 215b18; the unconvincing suggestion by Masefield 1986/1987: 134 that *śrota* in *śrotāpanna* refers to "hearing" overlooks this definition.

cerns are already reflected in the *Mahācattārīsaka-sutta*. The main versions of this discourse are as follows, given according to their school affiliation:

– Mūlasarvāstivāda tradition: a discourse quotation in the *Abhidharmakośopāyikā-ṭīkā* preserved in Tibetan translation;[4]
– Sarvāstivāda tradition: a *Madhyama-āgama* discourse, preserved in Chinese translation;[5]
– Theravāda tradition: a *Majjhima-nikāya* discourse, preserved in Pāli.[6]

The *Mahācattārīsaka-sutta* and its counterparts examine the noble eightfold path from the viewpoint of right concentration. The parallel versions define right concentration as one-pointedness of the mind that is supported by the other seven factors of the noble eightfold path. They then show how these factors interrelate, indicating that right view functions as a precursor for the other factors of the path.

The particular function of right view here is to differentiate between right path-factors and their opposites, wrong path-factors. In this role, right view has the support of right effort and right mindfulness. Right effort stands for making an effort to overcome wrong path-factors and to cultivate right path-factors, whereas right mindfulness is the quality of awareness that is required to oversee this task.

The *Mahācattārīsaka-sutta* and its parallels describe this cooperation of the path-factors right view, effort, and mindfulness in relation to other path-factors like intention, speech, action, and livelihood, including view itself. In each case, the parallel versions contrast wrong manifestations of the path-factors with their right counterparts.

The Pāli version stands alone in working instead through three instances of the path-factors: wrong path-factor, mundane right path-factor, and supramundane right path-factor. Here is the threefold exposition in the case of the path-factor of intention in the *Mahācattārīsaka-sutta*:

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[4] D 4094 *nyu* 43b7 to 47b4 or Q 5595 *thu* 84b1 to 87b2.

[5] MĀ 189 at T I 735b27 to 736c25; translated in Anālayo 2012c: 294–307. Regarding the school affiliation of this collection cf. above page 41 note 89.

[6] MN 117 at MN III 71,8 to 78,18.

> Monks, what is wrong intention? Intention of sensuality, intention of ill will, and intention of harming – monks, this is wrong intention.
>
> Monks, what is right intention? Monks, I say that right intention is of two types: monks, there is right intention that is with influxes, partaking of merit, and resulting in the acquisition [of future rebirth]. Monks, there is right intention that is noble, without influxes, supramundane, and a factor of the path.
>
> Monks, what is right intention that is with influxes, partaking of merit, and resulting in the acquisition [of future rebirth]? Intention of renunciation, intention of non-ill will, and intention of non-harming – monks this is right intention that is with influxes, partaking of merit, and resulting in the acquisition [of future rebirth].
>
> Monks, what is right intention that is noble, without influxes, supramundane, and a factor of the path? Whatever reflection, thought, intention, mental absorbing, mental fixing, directing of the mind, and verbal formation there is in the noble mind, the mind without influxes of one who is endowed with the noble path and who is cultivating the noble path – monks, this is right intention that is noble, without influxes, supramundane, and a factor of the path.[7]

The most remarkable aspect of the *Mahācattārīsaka-sutta*'s threefold exposition of intention is the distinction it draws between mundane and supramundane instances of this path-factor. Such a distinction is not found at all in the parallel versions in the *Madhyama-āgama* or in the *Abhidharmakośopāyikā-ṭīkā*, nor does such a presentation recur elsewhere in the Pāli discourses.[8]

The same threefold exposition continues in the *Mahācattārīsaka-sutta*'s descriptions of the supramundane path-factors of right speech, right action, and right livelihood.[9] These are as follows, this time leav-

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[7] MN 117 at MN III 73,1 to 73,17.

[8] The influence of a new conception of the "path" does seem to be evident to some degree, however, in MN 27 at MN I 183,34; cf. the discussion in Anālayo 2011a: 192.

[9] MN 117 at MN III 72,18 also presents a supramundane version of right view, which in what follows I am not taking up for more detailed discussion.

ing aside the descriptions of the corresponding wrong and mundane right path-factors:

> Monks, what is right speech that is noble, without influxes, supramundane, and a factor of the path? Whatever avoiding, abstaining, desisting, and refraining from the four types of verbal misconduct there is in one of noble mind, whose mind is without influxes, who is endowed with the noble path and who is cultivating the noble path – monks, this is right speech that is noble, without influxes, supramundane, and a factor of the path …[10]
>
> Monks, what is right action that is noble, without influxes, supramundane, and a factor of the path? Whatever avoiding, abstaining, desisting, and refraining from the three types of bodily misconduct there is in one of noble mind, whose mind is without influxes, who is endowed with the noble path and who is cultivating the noble path – monks, this is right action that is noble, without influxes, supramundane, and a factor of the path …[11]
>
> Monks, what is right livelihood that is noble, without influxes, supramundane, and a factor of the path? Whatever avoiding, abstaining, desisting, and refraining from wrong livelihood there is in one of noble mind, whose mind is without influxes, who is endowed with the noble path and who is cultivating the noble path – monks, this is right livelihood that is noble, without influxes, supramundane, and a factor of the path.[12]

Closer scrutiny of the above passages brings to light that some of the Pāli terms used in the *Mahācattārīsaka-sutta*'s definition of supramundane path-factors do not appear elsewhere in the Pāli discourses.[13]

In the case of right intention, expressions like mental "absorbing", *appanā*, and "mental inclination", *cetaso abhiniropanā*, belong to the

[10] MN 117 at MN III 74,6 to 74,11.

[11] MN 117 at MN III 74,31 to 75,1.

[12] MN 117 at MN III 75,22 to 75,26.

[13] In what follows, my discussion is based on excerpts from Anālayo 2012c: 289–324.

type of terminology used only in the Abhidharma and historically later Pāli texts.[14]

The string of terms "avoiding, abstaining, desisting, and refraining" also does not recur in this form in other discourses in the four Pāli *Nikāya*s, but is found in the same way in Abhidharma works like the *Vibhaṅga* and the *Dhammasaṅgaṇī*.[15] In the *Vibhaṅga* the above set of terms occurs as part of an exposition of the path-factors according to the specific method of the Abhidharma, the *abhidhammabhājaniya*, and is different from the terms the same work uses when it analyses these path-factors according to the method of the discourses, the *suttantabhājaniya*. In this way, the *Vibhaṅga* confirms that this mode of presentation reflects Abhidharma thought, differing from the mode of exposition found in the discourses.

Another noteworthy point is that the treatment of the path-factors from a supramundane viewpoint in the *Mahācattārīsaka-sutta* qualifies the mundane wholesome path-factors as "with influxes" and as "resulting in acquisition" (of future rebirth). Yet, the definitions given in the *Mahācattārīsaka-sutta* for the path-factors of mundane right intention, right speech, right action, and right livelihood recur in other Pāli discourses as part of the standard definition of the noble eightfold path that leads to the eradication of *dukkha*.[16] What according to other Pāli discourses leads to the eradication of *dukkha*, in the *Mahācattārīsaka-sutta* is merely something that results in the acquisition (of future rebirth) and that is associated with the influxes.

A different attitude towards the mundane wholesome path-factors can also be seen in the circumstance that the *Mahācattārīsaka-sutta* explicitly considers each of the supramundane path-factors as a "factor of

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[14] The whole list recurs verbatim in Dhs 10,17 and in Vibh 86,8: *takko vitakko saṅkappo appanā vyappanā cetaso abhiniropanā*.

[15] The string of terms *ārati virati paṭivirati veramaṇī* found in MN 117 at MN III 74,9+35 and 75,25 recurs in the definition of these path-factors from the viewpoint of the Abhidharma, the *abhidhammabhājaniya*, in Vibh 106,31+36 and 107,4; cf. also Dhs 63,35 and 64,2+7.

[16] MN 117 at MN III 73,9, 74,3+29 and 75,20, paralleling the definitions given for these path-factors, e.g., in MN 141 at MN III 251,16+19+23+26.

the path”, *maggaṅga*, a qualification it does not use in relation to their mundane counterparts. Yet the mundane wholesome path-factors would certainly also merit being reckoned as “factors of the path”.

The restriction of this qualification to the supramundane path-factors becomes understandable once it is recognized that this passage operates from a distinct Abhidharma viewpoint. The use of the qualification “factor of the path”, *maggaṅga*, is based on the idea of the “path” as understood in the Abhidharma and the commentaries. Instead of covering a prolonged period of practice, here the “path” is understood to refer only to the moment when any of the four stages of awakening is attained. I will return to this topic below. So the reference to a “factor of the path” in the *Mahācattārīsaka-sutta* has in view only the mind-moment during which the supramundane path is experienced. From this viewpoint, the mundane path-factors are indeed not fit to be reckoned “factors of the path”.

Similarly, the qualification “without influxes” refers, in accordance with the use of the same term in the *Dhammasaṅgaṇī*,[17] to the four paths and fruits. That is, the exposition of the supramundane path-factors in the *Mahācattārīsaka-sutta* does not refer to the path-factors with which an arhat is endowed, which is what the term “without influxes” usually implies in the discourses. Instead, it describes the path-factors present at the moment of attaining any of the four levels of awakening (or when these attainments are re-experienced in meditative practice). This is a significant shift in perspective, characteristic of the Abhidharma.[18]

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[17] Dhs 196,4: *ariyāpannā maggā ca maggaphalāni ca … ime dhammā anāsavā*.

[18] Cousins 1983: 7 points to the “distinction between a sequential and a momentary approach … [as] the most characteristic difference between sutta and early abhidhamma”, in that one of the tendencies responsible for “the origin of the abhidhamma literature lies in … this shift from a sequential process orientation to a momentary or event orientated standpoint.” Ronkin 2005: 16 similarly speaks of a “shift from analysing conscious experience in terms of processes to analysing it in terms of events.” This shift in perspective from the discourses to the Abhidharma finds an illustration in Ud-a 21,30, based on the different introductory phrases used in the canonical texts: whereas the discourses and the Vinaya tend to use the accusative *ekaṃ samayaṃ* (on the much discussed significance of the specification *ekaṃ samayaṃ* cf. also Anālayo 2014a) and the instrumental *tena samayena*, Abhidharma texts regularly employ the

The same focus on the mind-moment of awakening can be seen in the circumstance that, instead of expounding supramundane right intention in terms of its content, the *Mahācattārīsaka-sutta* describes the mental activities present in the state of mind of one who experiences any of the stages of awakening.[19] In the case of the three path-factors of right speech, right action, and right livelihood, the *Mahācattārīsaka-sutta* refers to the mental act of restraint. Clearly, a distinct Abhidharma flavour pervades this presentation.

The perceived importance of this description can be seen in a discussion on the nature of the supramundane path, recorded in the commentary on the *Vibhaṅga*, according to which a monk should ask another monk if he is a "reciter of the 'great forty'"(i.e., of the *Mahācattārīsaka*).[20] This question reflects the significance that was attached to the present discourse, whose recall the commentaries apparently considered an indispensable requirement for being able to engage in a discussion on the supramundane path.[21]

At this point, the question could be posed to what extent the *Mahācattārīsaka-sutta*'s overall exposition requires a presentation of the supramundane path-factors. According to the preamble found similarly in

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locative *tasmiṃ samaye*. Karunadasa 2010: 226 explains that, according to this distinction, when "the Abhidhamma uses the locative case, this is to show how time serves as a location, a sort of receptacle for the coming together of consciousness and its concomitants." This seems to fit an apparently emerging fascination with the moment of time; cf. also below page 169f.

[19] Bodhi in Ñāṇamoli 1995/2005: 1328 note 1103 comments that "the definition is formulated by way of the cognitive function rather than the objective content."

[20] Vibh-a 320,26: *tvaṃ tāva mahācattāḷīsakabhāṇako hosi na hosī ti pucchitabbo*.

[21] Whereas Adikaram 1946/1994: 31 and Goonesekere 1968: 689 simply list the *mahācattārīsakabhāṇaka* in their discussions of the *bhāṇaka* tradition, without attempting an explanation, Mori 1990: 125 takes the expression to be an example of "Bhāṇakas who further specialized in some particular suttas." Alternatively, perhaps the expression is used here simply to enquire if the other monk remembers the exposition given in this particular discourse, equivalent to asking him: *mahācattārīsakaṃ dhāresi?* Be that as it may, the use of the term definitely highlights the importance of MN 117, which due to its unique exposition must have been, as it still is, an important reference point for discussions on the supramundane path.

the parallel versions of the discourse, the main intent of the exposition is to show the supportive function of the other seven path-factors for right concentration. That is, the point at stake does not seem to be an exposition of the path-factors individually. Instead, the intention of the discourse appears to be to disclose their interrelation as a basis for developing right concentration, and in particular to highlight the function of right view, right effort, and right mindfulness as means of correction and support for the other path-factors. Such an intent of the exposition would not require a description of supramundane path-factors.[22]

This becomes all the more evident with the parallel versions, where a description of supramundane path-factors is not found at all.[23] Nevertheless, the main topic of the discourse – the development of right concentration based on the other path-factors and the cooperation of right view, right effort, and right mindfulness – is presented with similar, if not increased, clarity in these versions. In sum, it seems safe to conclude that the description of the supramundane path-factors must be a later addition to the *Mahācattārīsaka-sutta*.

Whereas the *Mahācattārīsaka-sutta* is the only discourse in the four Pāli *Nikāya*s to present a supramundane version of the path, a similar presentation can also be found in the *Saṃyukta-āgama* preserved in Chinese translation, probably representing a Mūlasarvāstivāda line of transmission.[24] Here is a translation of the exposition of the path-factor of intention from the *Saṃyukta-āgama*:

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[22] This has already been pointed out by Meisig 1987a: 233.

[23] The exposition of the path-factor of intention can be found in MĀ 189 at T I 735c29 and in the quotation in the *Abhidharmakośopāyikā-ṭīkā* at D 4094 *nyu* 44b7 or Q 5595 *thu* 84b1.

[24] SĀ 785 at T II 203a19, which has a parallel in D 4094 *ju* 205b6 or Q 5595 *tu* 234b8 (cf. also D 4094 *nyu* 16a6 or Q 5595 *thu* 49b7 and D 4094 *nyu* 72b4 or Q 5595 *thu* 117a7; identified by Honjō 1984: 90 and 110) and in an Uighur fragment, G a6f, Kudara and Zieme 1983: 302. A similar presentation of supramundane path-factors can also be found in SĀ 789 at T II 204c14, which in actual fact corresponds to eight discourses, each giving the mundane and supramundane version of one path-factor. SĀ 789 provides the exposition for right view and then indicates that another seven discourses should be similarly recited for the other seven path-factors. For a trans-

> What is right intention? Right intention is of two types: There is right intention that is mundane, with influxes, with grasping, [that turns] towards [rebirth in] a good destination; and there is right intention that is noble, supramundane, without influxes, without grasping, that rightly eradicates *duḥkha* and turns towards the transcendence of *duḥkha*.
>
> What is right intention that is mundane, with influxes, with grasping, [that turns] towards [rebirth in] a good destination? It is right intention [by way of] thoughts of renunciation, thoughts of non-ill will, and thoughts of non-harming – this is called right intention that is mundane, with influxes, with grasping, [that turns] towards [rebirth in] a good destination.
>
> What is right intention that is noble, supramundane, without influxes, without grasping, that rightly eradicates *duḥkha* and turns towards the end of *duḥkha*? It is [when] a noble disciple gives attention to *duḥkha* as *duḥkha*, gives attention to its arising … to its cessation … and to the path as path, [with a mind that] in the absence of influxes gives attention that is conjoined to mental states [by way of] discrimination, self-determination, understanding, repeated inclination, and resolution – this is called right intention that is noble, supramundane, without influxes, without grasping, that rightly eradicates *duḥkha* and turns towards the transcendence of *duḥkha*.[25]

The description of the supramundane path-factor of right intention in this *Saṃyukta-āgama* discourse is similar to the corresponding part of the *Mahācattārīsaka-sutta*. Unlike the *Mahācattārīsaka-sutta*, however, the *Saṃyukta-āgama* discourse only covers right path-factors in their worldly and supramundane manifestations, without mentioning wrong manifestations of the path-factors. The *Saṃyukta-āgama* discourse also does not take up the role of right view, right effort, and right mindful-

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lation of SĀ 785 and SĀ 789 cf. Anālayo 2012c: 312–321. On the school affiliation of the *Saṃyukta-āgama* cf. above page 21 note 23.

[25] SĀ 785 at T II 203b2 to 203b11.

ness in relation to other path-factors. These differences make it clear that the *Saṃyukta-āgama* discourse is not a parallel to the *Mahācattārīsaka-sutta*. Nor does this *Saṃyukta-āgama* discourse have a counterpart elsewhere among the Pāli discourses. Instead, this discourse is another instance of an exposition of the supramundane path-factors that would have come into being without standing in a direct relationship to the *Mahācattārīsaka-sutta*.

The supramundane path-factors of right speech, right action, and right livelihood in the *Saṃyukta-āgama* discourse are as follows (leaving aside the descriptions of the corresponding mundane right path-factors):

> What is right speech that is noble, supramundane, without influxes, without grasping, that rightly eradicates *duḥkha* and turns towards the end of *duḥkha*? It is [when] a noble disciple gives attention to *duḥkha* as *duḥkha*, gives attention to its arising … to its cessation … and to the path as path, [having] gotten rid of desire [related to] wrong livelihood,[26] [with a mind that] in the absence of influxes abstains from the four evil verbal activities and from any other evil verbal activities, removes them and detaches from them, he strongly guards himself against them and keeps himself back so as not to transgress, does not go beyond the proper time, and bewares of not overstepping bounds – this is called right speech that is noble, supramundane, without influxes, without grasping, that rightly eradicates *duḥkha* and turns towards the transcendence of *duḥkha* …[27]
>
> What is right action that is noble, supramundane, without influxes, without grasping, that rightly eradicates *duḥkha* and turns towards the end of *duḥkha*? It is [when] a noble disciple gives attention to *duḥkha* as *duḥkha*, gives attention to its arising … to its cessation … and to the path as path, [having] gotten rid of desire [related to] wrong livelihood, with a mind that in the absence of influxes does not delight in or attach to the three evil bodily activities or to any other of the number of evil bodily activities, he strongly

[26] Here and below adopting the variant 貪 instead of 念.

[27] SĀ 785 at T II 203b16 to 203b22.

guards himself against them and keeps himself back so as not to transgress, does not go beyond the proper time, and bewares of not overstepping bounds – this is called right action that is noble, supramundane, without influxes, without grasping, that rightly eradicates *duḥkha* and turns towards the transcendence of *duḥkha* …[28]

What is right livelihood that is noble, supramundane, without influxes, without grasping, that rightly eradicates *duḥkha* and turns towards the end of *duḥkha*? It is [when] a noble disciple gives attention to *duḥkha* as *duḥkha*, gives attention to its arising … to its cessation … and to the path as path, [with a mind that] in the absence of influxes does not delight in or attach to any wrong livelihood, he strongly guards himself against it and keeps himself back so as not to transgress, does not go beyond the proper time, and bewares of not overstepping bounds – this is called right livelihood that is noble, supramundane, without influxes, without grasping, that rightly eradicates *duḥkha* and turns towards the transcendence of *duḥkha*.[29]

Besides some variation in formulation, a prominent difference between these descriptions and those offered in the *Mahācattārīsaka-sutta* is that the *Saṃyukta-āgama* throughout places emphasis on the perspective of the four noble truths. Each description of the supramundane path-factors mentions that the disciple gives attention to *duḥkha*, its arising, its cessation, and the path to its cessation.[30]Another noteworthy point is that the descriptions of supramundane right speech and action incorporate a

[28] SĀ 785 at T II 203b26 to 203c3.

[29] SĀ 785 at T II 203c8 to 203c13.

[30] This difference is significant since, as pointed out by Cousins 1996: 52, "one of the key areas of debate which eventually separated the two *abhidhamma* traditions of Sarvāstivāda and Vibhajyavāda is the exact nature of the process by which enlightenment is attained. This debate focussed precisely upon the realization of the four noble truths at the time of achieving the 'stages of sanctity': stream-entry and so on. For the Sarvāstivādins this was a process of gradual realization (*anupūrvâbhisamaya*) in which the sixteen aspects of the four truths were separately known in successive moments. The Vibhajyavādins on the other hand taught that the truths were realized simultaneously in a single moment (*ekâbhisamaya*)." On the Sarvāstivādin position in this respect cf. also, e.g., Dhammajoti 2002/2007: 586–594.

cross-reference to livelihood, as both are undertaken when the disciple is free from the types of desire that are related to wrong livelihood.

Aside from such differences, however, the basic thrust of the presentation is the same, in that the *Mahācattārīsaka-sutta* and the *Saṃyukta-āgama* describe supramundane path-factors from what is clearly an Abhidharma viewpoint.

Another passage testifying to the same distinction between the mundane and the supramundane path can be found in the *Dīrgha-āgama* extant in Chinese translation, probably stemming from a Dharmaguptaka line of transmission.[31] The passage in question occurs as part of the "Discourse on the Three Groups",[32] which belongs to the same genre of summaries of the Dharma as the *Saṅgīti-sūtra* and the *Daśottara-sūtra*, but which unlike these two does not have a parallel in the Pāli *Nikāya*s or other Chinese *Āgama*s.[33]

The "Discourse on the Three Groups" distinguishes items arranged from Ones to Tens according to whether they lead towards a bad destiny, towards a good destiny, or towards Nirvāṇa.

When coming to the Eights, it takes up the eight path-factors as follows:

> What eight states lead towards a bad destiny? They are the eight wrong practices: wrong view, wrong intention, wrong speech, wrong action, wrong livelihood, wrong effort, wrong mindfulness, and wrong concentration.
>
> What eight states lead towards a good destiny? They are worldly right view, right intention, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, and right concentration.
>
> What eight states lead towards Nirvāṇa? They are the noble eightfold path: right view, right intention, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, and right concentration.[34]

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[31] Cf. above page 29 note 49.

[32] DĀ 12 at T I 59b14 to 60a27; for a translation and study of DĀ 12 cf. Anālayo 2013e.

[33] Cf. above page 39.

[34] DĀ 12 at T I 59c28 to 60a4.

Although the "Discourse on the Three Groups" does not provide a detailed exposition of individual path-factors comparable to the *Saṃyukta-āgama* and the *Mahācattārīsaka-sutta*, its presentation builds on the same distinction that underlies these two discourses: the mundane path in contrast to the noble path. Moreover, in a manner similar to the *Mahācattārīsaka-sutta* it follows a three-part presentation, where wrong path-factors are followed by mundane right path-factors, and these in turn are followed by noble right path-factors, in which case the significance of the qualification "noble" emerges from these path-factors being juxtaposed to the same path-factors qualified as "mundane".

The concern in these different discourses with distinguishing between path-factors that are mundane and those that are noble or supramundane shows that the beginning stages of the type of thought typical of the Abhidharma found their expression similarly in the discourse collections of the Dharmaguptaka tradition, of the Mūlasarvāstivāda tradition, and of the Theravāda tradition.

Another indication to be gathered from these presentations is to confirm a point I made in the previous chapter. Early Abhidharma analysis clearly has its root in meditation practice and experience, even though its final results can at times be somewhat removed from average practical concerns.

In the present case, the rationale behind this evident concern with the supramundane path is to shed light on what constitutes the essence of the practice of the Dharma: the culmination of the path in the experience of awakening.[35] The concerns voiced in this way are the outgrowth of eminently practical questions like: how do the path-factors lead to the moment of awakening? How do they operate at the time this is realized?[36] Such questions are not born out of mere dry scholastic concerns,

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[35] My use of the expression "experience" intends to reflect the early Buddhist conception of experience, such as expressed through the term *āyatana*; cf. in more detail Anālayo 2013a: 32f note 63 in reply to Sharf 1995 and 2000.

[36] Frauwallner 1963: 35 notes that the early Abhidharma was first of all concerned with the teachings on liberation, "als der älteste Abhidharma die Probleme, vor die er sich gestellt sah, methodisch durchzudenken begann, wandte er sich zunächst dem zu, was dem Buddhismus am meisten am Herzen lag, der Erlösungslehre." Gethin 1992: 351

however much they in the course of time led to scholastic elaborations that are not always directly related to actual practice.

4.2 The Path to Awakening

In what follows, I turn to the notion of the path in the early discourses, as a way to provide a contrast to the presentation in the *Mahācattārīsaka-sutta* as well as in the *Saṃyukta-āgama* and *Dīrgha-āgama* discourses. According to early Buddhist thought, the experience of awakening can take place at four successive levels:

- stream-entry,
- once-return,
- non-return,
- arhatship.

The distinction between these four levels relates to the fetters that are abandoned at each stage. Three out of the standard listing of ten fetters are abandoned at stream-entry: belief in a permanent self, doubt, and dogmatic clinging to particular rules and observances.[37] Such abandonment takes place right at the moment of experiencing stream-entry itself.[38] The fetters of sensual desire and aversion are weakened with

points out that "the concerns of the early Abhidhamma are practical rather than purely theoretical and scholastic; they arise directly out of the concerns of the Nikāyas themselves: what is going on in the mind when one tries to train it and wake it up?"

[37] Dhp 271 shows that attachment to rules and observances can also become a problem for Buddhist monks; the same point is also made in its Indic language parallels: stanza 65 in the Gāndhārī *Dharmapada*, Brough 1962/2001: 128, stanza 271 in the Patna *Dharmapada*, Cone 1989: 174, *Udānavarga* 32.31, Bernhard 1965: 440, and a stanza in the *Mahāvastu*, Senart 1897: 422,8. Thus the problem posed by this fetter is not solved by conversion to Buddhism; cf. also Anālayo 2003: 220 note 12.

[38] Sn 231: "with his attainment of vision, three things are abandoned: the view of identity, doubt, and whatever [clinging] to rules and observances there may be", *sahā v' assa dassanasampadāya, tayassu dhammā jahitā bhavanti, sakkāyadiṭṭhi vicikicchitañ ca, sīlabbataṃ vā pi yad atthi kiñci*. A similar description can be found in the *Mahāvastu*, Senart 1882b: 291,23: *sarvaiva yasya darśanasaṃpadāyo, trayo sya dharmā jahitā bhavanti, satkāyadṛṣṭī vicikitsitaṃ ca, śīlavrataṃ cāpi yad asti kiṃcit*. Sanskrit fragment SHT I 649 V2, Waldschmidt et al. 1965: 293, has preserved part of what

once-return and completely abandoned with non-return. The remaining five fetters – craving for fine material existence, for immaterial existence, conceit, restlessness, and ignorance – are abandoned on becoming an arhat, with which all the influxes, *āsava*s, are eradicated.

A recurrent formulation in the early discourses further distinguishes between those who are on the way to the realization of any of these four levels of awakening and those who have reached it. This results in a list of eight noble beings, regularly mentioned in the context of recollection of the community of noble ones.[39]

Such lists of eight noble beings appear to be common ground among the early discourses preserved in various traditions,[40] where the notion of being on the way to the realization of any of the four levels of awakening has a prolonged period of progress in mind. Thus the path to awakening is compared to the path to a town.[41] Another simile describes more specifically a path that leads to an ancient forgotten town in the jungle.[42] Alternatively, the path to awakening could be compared to the

appears to have been a quote of a similar statement; cf. also Skilling 1992: 141 and 1997: 601.

[39] The standard description of the community of noble ones speaks of the "four pairs of persons, the eight individuals", where the eight comprise those who are on the path to any of the four levels of awakening and those who have reached them; cf., e.g., MN 7 at MN I 37,25: *cattāri purisayugāni aṭṭha purisapuggalā*, and its parallel EĀ 13.5 at T II 574b6: 四雙, 八輩.

[40] At times there are variations in the sequence of enumeration which place those on the path to an attainment after those who have already reached it; cf., e.g., DN 33 at DN III 255,3, in which case parallels found in DĀ 9 at T I 52b19 and in the *Saṅgītiparyāya*, T 1536 at T XXVI 441a13 (for similar lists in other texts cf. Skilling 1997: 420f), reflect the order of attainment. For a survey of several such departures from the standard order of listing cf. Anālayo 2012d: 77f. Closer inspection gives the impression that such variations are the results of errors during oral transmission, pace Manné 1995: 88, who holds that "the inconsistency of the ordering of the stages and their fruit indicate[s] that the division into stage and fruit is spurious." Variations in sequence are in fact a frequently found occurrence in orally transmitted material; cf. Anālayo 2011a: 874–876.

[41] MN 107 at MN III 6,3 and its parallels MĀ 144 at T I 653b7 and T 70 at T I 876a17.

[42] Cf. above page 129 note 2.

path that leads from the gate of a town to its ruler.[43] Another simile speaks instead of the path used by deer living in the wilds.[44] There can be little doubt that these passages see the journey along the path as something that involves a more or less extended time period leading up to realization.

With the developed Abhidharma and the commentarial tradition a shift in perspective occurs, and the path is seen as standing for a single moment only.[45]

An example that illustrates this shift of perspective would be the *Dakkhiṇāvibhaṅga-sutta* and its Pāli commentary. The parallel versions of this discourse list those who are on the way to the realization of any of the four levels of awakening among different recipients of gifts.[46]

In line with the developed notion of the path as standing for a single mind-moment on the brink of awakening, the Pāli commentary on this passage reasons that someone might attain the path just as he or she is about to receive offerings.[47]

Needless to say, the *Dakkhiṇāvibhaṅga-sutta* and its parallels would not have allotted a special place to those who are on the way to the realization of a particular level of awakening, alongside those who have reached the same level of awakening, if this were to refer only to those whose breakthrough to liberation takes place precisely at the moment they are receiving a gift.[48]

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[43] SN 35.204 at SN IV 195,10 and its parallels SĀ 1175 at T II 316a4 and a quotation in the *Abhidharmakośopāyikā-ṭīkā*, D 4094 *nyu* 43b5 or Q 5595 *thu* 83a4.

[44] MN 19 at MN I 118,14 and its parallel MĀ 102 at T I 590a15.

[45] Bodhi 2000: 1491 explains that "what is innovative in the Abhidhamma is the conception of the supramundane path as a momentary breakthrough"; cf. also the detailed discussion in Harvey 2013 and 2014.

[46] Cf. MN 142 at MN III 254,28, MĀ 180 at T I 722b14, T 84 at T I 903c27, a quotation in the *Abhidharmakośopāyikā-ṭīkā*, D 4094 *ju* 255b2 or Q 5595 *tu* 291a2, a Tocharian fragment, YQ 1.20 1/2, Ji 1998: 182, and an Uighur fragment, folio 9a, Geng and Klimkeit 1988: 202f.

[47] Ps V 72,15.

[48] Cf. also Gethin 1992: 131f.



Figure 4.1 Sujātā's Offering

The medallion shows Sujātā offering food to the bodhisattva Gautama, represented by his seat under the tree of awakening.

Amarāvatī stūpa, courtesy The Trustees of the British Museum.

The shift in perspective towards a conception of the path as a momentary event, instead of seeing it as a more or less prolonged process, marks a clear difference between the thought reflected in the early discourses and later tradition.[49] The shift from process to event evident here is char-

[49] A shift towards momentariness has impacted on ancient Indian thought in general, cf. the survey in Bronkhorst 2006: 292–297. Bronkhorst 2006: 296 then concludes that "it seems hard to deny that this particular way of visualizing the world started within a school of Buddhism" (his remark refers to conceiving time in terms of momentariness and matter in terms of atoms). In the case of the Jain tradition in particular,

acteristic of the Abhidharma.[50] This makes it clear that the presentation in the *Mahācattārīsaka-sutta* is definitely an example of Abhidharma thought manifesting in the Pāli discourses, similar to the presentations of the supramundane path in the *Saṃyukta-āgama* and the reference to the same conception in the *Dīrgha-āgama*. Among the discourses surveyed in my study so far, such occurrences of the notion of the supramundane path appear to be the most prominent instances of Abhidharma influence.

In contrast, although the *Saṅgīti-sūtra* and the *Daśottara-sūtra* testify to the development of summaries, *mātṛkā*s, this is in itself not purely an Abhidharma phenomenon, in spite of the undeniable importance of the *mātṛkā*s for the formation of Abhidharma texts. The growth of the list of elements in the parallel versions of the *Bahudhātuka-sūtra* exemplifies a tendency towards comprehensiveness typical of the Abhidharma enterprise, yet the elements that appear to have been added are for the most part merely borrowings from other discourses.

With the detailed analyses of the four noble truths and of absorption experience in the *Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna-sutta* and the *Anupada-sutta*, the Abhidharma flavour becomes stronger, evident in the occasional use of Abhidharma terminology and in the tendency for analysis to proliferate for its own sake.

In the case of the *Mahācattārīsaka-sutta*, however, not only does distinct Abhidharma terminology emerge, but also distinct Abhidharma thought evident in the description of the supramundane path. Although

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Bronkhorst 2000: 598 notes that already the *Sūyagaḍa* (I.1.1.17) shows awareness of the notion of momentariness as a Buddhist teaching; cf. Bollée 1977: 15. Bronkhorst 2000: 596 then comments that "the acquaintance of the Sūyagaḍa with the Buddhist theory of momentariness, well before the idea of moments had been introduced into Jainism", makes it "plausible to assume that Jainism borrowed this idea from Buddhist [thought]". On the evolution of the notion of momentariness in Buddhist texts cf. the study by von Rospatt 1995.

[50] Cousins 1983: 7 explains that "the eightfold way is usually intended in the suttas to show the path or process leading to enlightenment … with the abhidhamma it is seen as existing as part of a single event on particular occasions e.g. at the moment of enlightenment … the early abhidhamma works are then an attempt to fix the structure of Buddhist thought in terms of momentary events."

positing a clear demarcation between what has had an influence on the development of Abhidharma and what should be considered Abhidharma proper is not easy,[51] it seems to me that with the *Mahācattārīsaka-sutta* a mature stage of early Abhidharma thought is apparent. Depending on where one prefers to draw the demarcation line, the analysis of the four noble truths in the *Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna-sutta* and the analysis of the absorptions in the *Anupada-sutta* could also be considered as instances that show Abhidharma influence.

In terms of the simile I used in the introduction to my study, like the fossils of an archaeopteryx these discourses testify to a gradual development that eventually was to find its consummation in the Abhidharma as a genre of its own.[52] Early stages of this development naturally appear in the discourses, which in the beginning were the arena within which such new thought naturally could find an expression.[53]

While the stages of development that informed the early canonical Abhidharma are thus evident in the discourses, as time went on the Abhidharma eventually acquired such importance of its own that it gradually overshadowed the discourses and eventually stood in their place as the central point of reference for members of the tradition.[54]

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[51] Cox in Willemen et al. 1998: 170 notes that "we can find many *sūtras* that exemplify the stylistic characteristics of Abhidharma texts. The transition to texts with a more pronounced taxonomic and expository character was certainly a gradual one. Indeed, the point of demarcation between *sūtra* and Abhidharma is very difficult to locate."

[52] Thomas 1933/2004: 160 notes that "in the sense of a method … Abhidhamma is no doubt much older than the existing works of that name", as several discourses give the impression that "the method was already in existence when those suttas were revised." According to Horner 1942/1983: xi, "the term abhidhamma when found in the Vinayapiṭaka and Suttapiṭaka … should be taken as referring to some material or method in existence prior to the compilation of this Piṭaka [i.e. the third], and out of which it was gradually elaborated and eventually formed."

[53] Skilling 2012: 429 queries "can we envisage a stage when the Abhidharma as a self-conscious enterprise had not yet arisen or gained canonical status? At this stage – the beginnings of Abhidharmic systematization – the natural format for reformulated material was that of the *sūtra*, and the natural place was the *Sūtrapiṭaka* – where else to place it?"

[54] According to Hirakawa 1993/1998: 127,"even before the contents of the *Sūtra-piṭaka* had been finalized, the Buddha's disciples were analyzing his teachings with methods

Subsequent developments in Abhidharma thought in fact are no longer seen in the early discourses,[55] but appear only in the canonical Abhidharma collections, and then subsequently in the commentaries and expositions that in turn became the arena for new thought once the Abhidharma collections had reached a point of closure.

The process of canonization of Abhidharma as a genre of texts on its own, apart from the discourses, inevitably led to the question of its authenticity. The same problem confronted the upholders of the Abhidharma and the followers of the Mahāyāna: How to establish that these texts should be recognized as the "word of the Buddha"?

4.3 The Need for Authentication

The notion of the "word of the Buddha" appears to have been flexible right from the outset.[56] Several discourses spoken by disciples conclude with an endorsement by the Buddha, who states that he would have explained the matter in the same way, so the monks should memorize the discourse as spoken by the disciple.[57] In this way, such expositions re-

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similar to those employed later in [the] *abhidharma*. These early analyses were often incorporated into *sūtras*. After the *Sūtra-piṭaka* had been established and its contents determined, *abhidharma* investigations were considered to be a separate branch of literature … [and] later compiled into a collection called the *Abhidharma-piṭaka*."

[55] Mizuno 1969: 14f explains that "we come across a good amount of abhidharmic sūtras in the *Sūtra-piṭaka* … but as this tendency became more specialized, the way of explanation became totally different from what the sūtras were meant to have. The result was that it … had to separate itself into a different literary form under the head 'abhidharma'."

[56] Bond 1975: 409f notes that "the concept of 'the word of the Buddha' was a formal category or a theory which did not necessarily mean the Buddha actually spoke these words, but [only that] they conformed in some way to what was taken to be the basic lines of his teachings."

[57] An example would be MN 18 at MN I 114,3 and its parallel MĀ 115 at T I 604c17, in which case another parallel, EĀ 40.10 at T II 743c20, only reports that the Buddha stated that he would have expounded the matter in the same way, without an injunction that the monks should memorize the discourse. The *Atthasālinī* refers to MN 18 in its defence of the authenticity of the Abhidharma, presenting it as an example of a

ceived canonical status and became as much part of the "word of the Buddha" as if they had been spoken by the teacher himself.[58] Even without explicit approval from the Buddha, explanations and comments made by disciples have become canonical discourses.

A case that points to features that recur in later discussions of scriptural authenticity can be found in a discourse in the *Aṅguttara-nikāya*. The discourse reports that Śakra, the ruler of the *deva*s in the Heaven of the Thirty-three, has descended to earth to find out if a teaching just delivered by the monk Uttara had originally been spoken by the Buddha.[59] In reply to Śakra's query, Uttara states that "whatever is well said is all the word of that Blessed One, the arhat, the fully awakened one; I and others speak taking that as our basis."[60]

Uttara illustrates this with the help of a simile that describes a large group of people who take grain from a great heap and carry it away in various containers. On being asked where they got the grain, they will answer that they got it from the great heap. The simile makes it clear that the dictum was meant to indicate that the Buddha was the real

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discourse that is reckoned as the word of the Buddha even though it was spoken by a disciple; cf. As 5,1.

[58] Malalasekera 1928/1994: 88f explains that "during the Master's lifetime … discussions, friendly interviews, and analytical expositions used to take place … sometimes it happened that accounts of these discussions were duly reported to the Teacher, and some of them were approved by him, and he would then ask the monks to bear the particular expositions in mind as the best that could have been given. The utterances of the disciples that won such approbation were treasured by the members of the community … and held in high esteem, honoured as much as the words of the Buddha himself." Mizuno 1982: 21 points out that discourses delivered "by authors both human and non-human were still regarded as the teaching of the Buddha because [these] were reported to the Buddha, who verified their accuracy"; cf. also MacQueen 1981 and Skilling 2010.

[59] AN 8.8 at AN IV 163,6; Arunasiri 2006: 634 comments that here "Sakka is presented as supervising what the monks were preaching."

[60] AN 8.8 at AN IV 164,7: *yaṃ* (S^{e}: *yaṅ*) *kiñci subhāsitaṃ, sabbaṃ taṃ tassa bhagavato vacanaṃ arahato sammāsambuddhassa, tato upādāy' upādāya mayañ* (S^{e}: *mayaṃ*) *c' aññe* (S^{e}: *dhaññaṃ*) *ca bhaṇāmā ti*. This differs from the formulation in a rock edict by Aśoka, according to which all that the Buddha said was well said, Bloch 1950: 154: *e keci bhaṃte bhagavatā buddhena bhāsite savve se subhāsite vā*.

source of anything Uttara had been teaching, even if Uttara had not been repeating something that in this exact manner had already been spoken by the Buddha.

The discourse then takes an interesting turn, as Śakra informs Uttara that the Buddha had actually given this teaching earlier. However, memory of this teaching delivered by the Buddha had in the meantime been lost among the four assemblies of disciples (monks, nuns, male lay followers, and female lay followers).

Two features of this discourse are worth noting. One is the statement made by Uttara, which taken out of its original context could be interpreted as implying that whatsoever is well said deserves for that reason to be reckoned the word of the Buddha. The other feature is the idea that memory of a teaching given by the Buddha had been lost among humans, but was still preserved in the Heaven of the Thirty-three.

Although there seems to be no known parallel to this *Aṅguttara-nikāya* discourse, a counterpart to the first part of the statement attributed to Uttara occurs in the *Śikṣāsamuccaya*. The *Śikṣāsamuccaya* proclaims that "whatever is well said is all the Buddha's word", a statement that has played an important role in the authentication of Mahāyāna texts as the word of the Buddha.[61] The *Śikṣāsamuccaya* continues by indicating that one who rejects as inauthentic what should be reckoned as the word of the Buddha will go to hell.

Rebirth in hell is also to be expected for a schismatic.[62] According to the *Atthasālinī*, one who refuses to recognize the Abhidharma as the word of the Buddha thereby engages in one of the eighteen causes for a schism.[63] Combining the indications given in the *Śikṣāsamuccaya* and the *Atthasālinī*, it becomes clear that rejecting the Abhidharma was considered to have consequences as dire as rejecting the Mahāyāna.

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[61] Bendall 1902/1970: 15,19: *yat kiñcin … subhāṣitaṃ sarvaṃ tad buddhabhāṣitam*; cf. the discussion in, e.g., Lamotte 1944/1981: 80f note 2, Snellgrove 1958: 620, MacQueen 1981: 314, McDermott 1984: 29, Collins 1990: 94, Williams 1991/2009: 42, Lopez 1995: 27, Ruegg 1995: 180, and Silk 2008: 276.

[62] AN 5.129 at AN III 146,28; cf. also the discussion in Silk 2007: 255.

[63] As 29,21; quoted above page 126 note 98.

The need shared by upholders of the Abhidharma and of the Mahāyāna to establish the authenticity of their respective texts extends beyond the dismal prospects they predict for those who do not accept their texts as the Buddha's word. Both also share a sense of superiority vis-à-vis the early teachings and those who confine their study of the Dharma to them. From a fully fledged Mahāyāna viewpoint, the early discourses are considered as teachings that are "inferior", *hīna*.[64] The teachings of the Abhidharma in turn are considered by their followers to be "superior", *abhi-*, in comparison to the early discourses.[65]

In this way, the early teachings increasingly tend to fade in importance and are eventually superseded by the new texts,[66] a development that in turn led to the formation of independent textual collections, the *Abhidharma-piṭaka* and the *Bodhisattva-piṭaka*, considered to be superior to the early discourses.[67]

The parallelism between the Abhidharma and the Mahāyāna extends beyond the formation of such collections, as both traditions have given rise to texts in the form of *dhāraṇī*s.[68] While this feature is of course well known in the case of the Mahāyāna traditions, the beginnings of a

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[64] That "the *āgama*s are *hīnayāna* scriptures" is explicitly stated in T 1723 (妙法蓮華經玄贊) at T XXXIV 655a13: 即阿含等小乘經是; on the significance and usage of the term *hīnayāna* cf. Anālayo 2014c.

[65] As 2,14 explains that in the case of the term *abhidhamma*, "the word *abhi-* is used by way of exceeding and being distinguished", *atirekavisesaṭṭhadīpako hi ettha 'abhi'-saddo*. One out of several explanatory glosses quoted in the **Mahāvibhāṣā*, T 1545 at T XXVII 4b13, similarly indicates that "because this Dharma is superior, it is called Abhidharma", 此法增上故, 名阿毘達磨.

[66] Cox 2004: 4f explains that with the fully developed Abhidharma "the very sūtras from which *abhidharma* arose were now subordinated as mere statements in need of analysis that only the *abhidharma* could provide. No longer serving as the starting point for *abhidharma* exegesis, the sūtras were invoked only as a supplemental authority to buttress independent reasoned investigation or to corroborate doctrinal points actually far removed from their scriptural antecedents."

[67] On the *Bodhisattva-piṭaka* cf. the study by Pagel 1995.

[68] The use of the Theravāda Abhidhamma as a basis for the creation of *dhāraṇī*s is discussed by McDaniel 2009; on Abhidharma recitation in Thailand and Burma cf. also, e.g., Swearer 1995: 336.

concern with *dhāraṇī*s can be seen already in comparatively early texts not related to the Mahāyāna.[69]

The notion of superiority shared by the Abhidharma and the Mahāyāna has in the case of the former found expression in the belief that the teachings of the Buddha cannot be understood without relying on the Abhidharma. According to the *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya*, this had in fact been explicitly stated by the Buddha himself.[70]

The high regard for the Abhidharma and its teachers in the Theravāda tradition can be seen in the Mihintale Rock inscriptions from Sri Lanka. The inscriptions record that those who have mastered the Abhidharma should be given a higher share of the offerings received than those who have mastered the Vinaya or the discourses.[71]

The same high regard also finds expression in the fact that the commentary on the *Dīgha-nikāya*, the *Sumaṅgalavilāsinī* gives pride of place to the *Abhidharma-piṭaka* in its description of the gradual decline of the Buddha's dispensation (*sāsana*) over a period of 5000 years. As things gradually become worse, the *Abhidharma-piṭaka* is the first of the three *piṭaka*s to disappear, followed by the discourses and the Vinaya.[72]

In its description of the first *saṅgīti*, the same *Sumaṅgalavilāsinī* then reports that the recitation of the *Abhidharma-piṭaka* was followed by an

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[69] Cf., e.g., Burnouf 1844/1876: 482, Winternitz 1912: 249, Waddell 1914: 37 (cf. the reply by Winternitz 1920/1968: 380), Hoffmann 1939: 10f, Waldschmidt 1957b: 30–32 (cf. also Waldschmidt 1958: 405), Bernhard 1967, Lamotte 1976: 1860, Braarvig 1985: 21f, Kariyawasam 1989: 519, Skilling 1992: 168f, Bongard-Levin et al. 1996: 31f, Schmithausen 1997: 53, Strauch 2007: 40–47, and Davidson 2009: 112–116.

[70] *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya* 1.4 indicates that "without the instructions in the Abhidharma a pupil is not able to understand the Dharma", Pradhan 1967: 3,2: *nahi vinā 'bhidharmopadeśena śiṣyaḥ śakto dharmān pravicetum iti*.

[71] Wickremasinghe 1904/1994: 85; cf. also Goonesekere 1961: 54, Malalgoda 1976: 21 note 30, and Buswell and Lopez 2014a: 3. Rhys Davids 1908: 19 notes that the preference shown in this inscription is also reflected in the *Milindapañha*, where "the acquisition by the youthful genius Nāgasena of the contents of the Abhidhamma is acclaimed with wonder and delight in earth and heaven, while his rapid attainment of the remaining *piṭakas* excites no such commotion"; cf. Mil 13,10.

[72] Sv III 898,37: "the Abhidharma-piṭaka disappears first", *paṭhamaṃ abhidhamma-piṭakaṃ nassati*; for a study of various predictions of decline cf. Nattier 1991.

earthquake.[73] In Buddhist thought the occurrence of earthquakes tends to mark a particular event as important.[74]

A parallelism between early Abhidharma and early Mahāyāna texts can also be found in the role played by chief disciples like Śāriputra, who serve to provide additional authentication to the respective teachings. Besides being depicted as a faithful disciple of the Mahāyāna, Śāriputra also plays a central role in early canonical Abhidharma texts.[75]

The *Saṅgītiparyāya* and the *Dharmaskandha* are reckoned by some strands of the Sarvāstivāda tradition to be the work of Śāriputra.[76] The **Śāriputrābhidharma*, as its name indicates, was also believed to stem from Śāriputra. The *Atthasālinī* reports that the textual order of the Theravāda Abhidharma was devised by the same eminent disciple.[77]

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[73] Sv I 15,20; the earthquake marks the completion of the recitation of the *tipiṭaka*, of which the *Abhidhammapiṭaka* was the last to be recited.

[74] The tendency to associate important events with earthquakes seems to have had its starting point in a set of three causes for an earthquake; cf. Przyluski 1918: 424, Waldschmidt 1944: 107, Frauwallner 1956: 158, Bareau 1979: 79, and Anālayo 2013a: 19. Two of these three causes are a commotion of the elements and an act of psychic power; the third is the only one where an earthquake marks an important event: the death of the Buddha. For a study of earthquakes in Buddhist literature in general cf. Ciurtin 2009 and 2012.

[75] In his detailed study of Śāriputra, Migot 1952 dedicates a whole chapter (8) to Śāriputra in Mahāyāna texts, and another whole chapter (11) to Śāriputra in relation to the Abhidharma.

[76] The *Saṅgītiparyāya* is prefaced by a remark that attributes the work to Śāriputra, T 1536 at T XXVI T 367a5, and the work itself concludes with the Buddha praising Śāriputra for having expounded it, T 1536 at T XXVI 453b13; cf. also T 1821 at T XLI 8b26 and T 2154 at T LV 557a10. The *Abhidharmakośavyākhyā*, Wogihara 1932: 11,29, however, instead attributes the work to Mahākauṣṭhila: *saṃgītiparyāyasya mahākauṣṭhilaḥ [kartā]*. The *Dharmaskandha* presents itself as the work of Mahāmaudgalyāyana, T 1537 at T XXVI 453b25; cf. also the postscript to the work, T 1537 at T XXVI 513c16, as well as T 1821 at T XLI 8b27 and T 2154 at T LV 557a8. In this case, the *Abhidharmakośavyākhyā*, Wogihara 1932: 11,27, attributes the work rather to Śāriputra: *dharmaskandhasya ārya-śāriputraḥ [kartā]*.

[77] As 17,12: "the sequence of the Abhidharma texts was indeed devised by the Elder Sāriputta", *abhidhammo vācanāmaggo nāma sāriputtattherappabhavo*. The commentarial tradition also relates the *Paṭisambhidāmagga* to this eminent disciple; cf. Paṭis-a I 1,17 and Warder 1982: xlvi.

The different Abhidharma traditions thus agree in according a central role to Śāriputra as the chief disciple active in the formation of the canonical Abhidharma.

In the case of the *Kathāvatthu*, a work of the Theravāda Abhidharma canon, tradition reports that this treatise was delivered by a disciple named Moggaliputtatissa at the time of King Aśoka. The *Atthasālinī* nevertheless argues that all of the seven texts of the Theravāda Abhidharma collection should be considered the word of the Buddha. This also holds for the *Kathāvatthu*, because its *mātṛkā* had already been laid out by the Buddha in the wise foresight that a future disciple of his by the name of Moggaliputtatissa would expound the *Kathāvatthu* based on this outline.[78]

The position that the Abhidharma is the word of the Buddha is also taken in the Sarvāstivāda tradition. Works like the *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya* and the **Mahāvibhāṣā* report that the Buddha had given Abhidharma teachings on various occasions.[79] Thus here, too, the contribution by chief disciples appears to be seen as mainly a matter of formal arrangement and working out details. The difference between the Theravāda and Sarvāstivāda traditions in this respect is thus less pronounced than one might have thought at first, given the explicit authorship attri-

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[78] As 4,3; cf. also Kv-a 1,15. The *Kathāvatthu* is mentioned in the account of the third *saṅgīti* in the *Samantapāsādikā*, Sp I 61,13, but not in the account of the same event in T 1462 (善見律毘婆沙) at T XXIV 684b10; cf. also Lamotte 1958/1988: 273, Guruge 2005: 106, Sujato 2006: 133, and Pinte 2011/2012: 45.

[79] According to the *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya* 1.4, the Abhidharma "was spoken occasionally by the Blessed One", Pradhan 1967: 3,2: *sa tu prakīrṇa ukto bhagavatā*; cf. also the *Abhidharmakośavyākhyā*: "the Abhidharma … was spoken by the Blessed One here and there", Wogihara 1932: 12,5: *abhidharmo … tatratatra bhagavatoktaḥ*. The **Mahāvibhāṣā*, T 1545 at T XXVII 1b5, explains that "when the Blessed One was in the world, in various places, directions and towns, for all those who had the inclination he discoursed on the path in various ways, analyzing and expounding the Abhidharma in detail", 世尊在世, 於處處方邑, 爲諸有情, 以種種論道, 分別演說阿毘達磨. Thus, according to T 1562 (阿毘達磨順正理論) at T XXIX 329c18, "the Abhidharma is certainly the word of the Buddha", 阿毘達磨定是佛說. As T 1563 (阿毘達磨藏顯宗論) at T XXIX 779b29 confirms, "the great teacher himself first spoke the Abhidharma in detail", 大師先自演說阿毘達磨.

butions of works like the *Saṅgītiparyāya* and the *Dharmaskandha* to chief disciples.[80]

A problem in attributing the texts of the Abhidharma and of the Mahāyāna to the Buddha or to chief disciples that lived at his time is of course the account of the first *saṅgīti* at Rājagṛha. As discussed in the first chapter of this study, several of the canonical Vinayas do not mention a recitation of an Abhidharma collection at this time. Nor do the different Vinayas report the recitation of Mahāyāna texts.

The *Tarkajvālā*, a sixth-century doxographical work that offers a detailed examination of Buddhist schools and their tenets, confronts the allegation that the Mahāyāna should not be reckoned the word of the Buddha because it is not included in the discourses.[81] In reply to such allegations, the *Tarkajvālā* argues that the Mahāyāna is the word of the Buddha which had been collected by bodhisattvas like Samantabhadra, Mañjuśrī, Maitreya, etc. The teachings collected by them were not included in the canonical collections because they were beyond the ken of the *śrāvaka*s responsible for collecting the word of the Buddha.[82] In this way, the idea that the Mahāyāna teachings are beyond the ken of ordinary disciples expresses a sense of superiority found among both followers of the Mahāyāna and adherents of the Abhidharma.

Another similarity can be seen in the divine origins attributed to the disclosure of some of the texts. Tāranātha's *History of Buddhism*, just to mention one example, reports that Mahāyāna texts originated from the realm of the *nāga*s, as well as from *deva*s, *gandharva*s, and *rākṣasa*s.[83]

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[80] Dhammajoti 2013: 12 sums up that "like the Theravādins, the Sarvāstivādins too maintain that the *abhidharma* was taught by the Buddha himself. But unlike the Theravādins … the Sarvāstivādins ascribe their seven canonical texts to individual authors."

[81] The argument to be rejected is that "the Mahāyāna was not spoken by the Buddha, it is not included in the discourses, etc.", Eckel 2008: 307,28 (4.7): *na buddhoktir mahāyānaṃ, sūtrāntādāv asaṃgrahāt*.

[82] The reply is as follows: "our basic collections were not compiled by the *śrāvaka*s because the teachings of the Mahāyāna were beyond their ken", Eckel 2008: 336,8 (4.35cd): *bdag cag gi rtsa ba'i sdud par byed pa nyan thos ni ma yin te, theg pa chen po'i gsung rab ni de dag gi yul ma yin pa'i phyir ro*.

[83] Schiefner 1868: 50,14.

To be sure, the idea that canonical teachings may originate from celestial beings is not foreign to early Buddhism. Discourses in the *Saṃyutta-nikāya* and *Saṃyukta-āgama*, for example, report various conversations taking place between *deva*s and the Buddha or his disciples.

At times, a *deva* may even give a teaching to a Buddhist monk, as in the case of the *Lomasakaṅgiyabhaddekaratta-sutta*. According to the Pāli version of this discourse the *deva* informed the monk of a poem, spoken by the Buddha in the Heaven of the Thirty-three, of which the monk was not aware.[84] This brings to mind the discourse in the *Aṅguttara-nikāya* on the visit paid by Śakra to the monk Uttara and the relation it establishes between a teaching given by the Buddha and the Heaven of the Thirty-three. Returning to the *Lomasakaṅgiyabhaddekaratta-sutta*, according to the two parallel versions the poem had been delivered by the Buddha when he was in the Bamboo Grove at Rājagṛha, instead of being spoken when he was in the Heaven of the Thirty-three.[85]

The Heaven of the Thirty-three features again in the Theravāda tradition as the location for the delivery of the Abhidharma by the Buddha during a sojourn in that celestial realm to give teachings to his mother. In what follows I study some aspects of this tale.

4.4 The Buddha in the Heaven of the Thirty-three

The tale of the Buddha's sojourn in the Heaven of the Thirty-three is found in a range of sources. The canonical versions are as follows:

- Mūlasarvāstivāda tradition: a discourse in the *Saṃyukta-āgama*, preserved in Chinese translation, and a version of the tale found in the Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinaya, preserved in Chinese and Tibetan;[86]
- uncertain school affiliation: a discourse in the *Ekottarika-āgama* preserved in Chinese translation.[87]

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[84] MN 134 at MN III 200,12.

[85] MĀ 166 at T I 698c20 and T 77 at T I 886b12.

[86] SĀ 506 at T II 134a7 to 134c23 and T 1451 at T XXIV 346a14 to 347a18 with its Tibetan counterpart in D 6 *da* 88a2 to 92a1 or Q 1035 *ne* 85a2 to 89a6.

[87] EĀ 36.5 at T II 705b23 to 707c4.

In the Theravāda tradition, this tale is recorded only in commentarial literature.[88]

The *Saṃyukta-āgama* discourse reports that the Buddha had been spending the rains retreat in the Heaven of the Thirty-three, teaching the Dharma to his mother and the assembled *deva*s.[89] The four assemblies on earth longed for his return and asked Mahāmaudgalyāyana to invite the Buddha to come back, pointing out that whereas *deva*s can easily visit the Buddha on earth, when he is in heaven human beings are unable to ascend to that realm to pay their respects to him.[90]

The contrast made in this way between the abilities of *deva*s and those of humans sets a basic theme that forms the background of the whole tale, where the Buddha's superiority as a teacher of humans and *deva*s is graphically depicted in his sojourn in heaven.

Unlike those who petition him, Mahāmaudgalyāyana of course has the ability to fly up to heaven, so he obliges by ascending to the Heaven of the Thirty-three himself to convey the message to the Buddha. In

[88] Dhp-a III 216,17 to 226,3, Pj II 570,10 to 570,20, Jā 483 at Jā IV 265,17 to 266,5; cf. also Vism 391,1 to 392,20. Another version of the story can be found in tale 86 of the *Avadānaśataka*, Speyer 1909/ 1970: 89,1 to 94,16. For Sanskrit fragments cf. SHT III 835, Waldschmidt et al. 1971: 56f; SHT V 1145 and SHT V 1146 V1 to R1, Sander and Waldschmidt 1985: 144f; and fragment Or 15009/49, Ye 2009: 125. Another version occurs in the Chinese counterpart to the *Aṭṭhakavagga*, T 198 at T IV 184c25 to 185c9; cf. Bapat 1950: 36–42. The tale is also found in several biographies of the Buddha; cf., e.g., T 156 (大方便佛報恩經) at T III 136b17 to 137b10, T 200 (撰集百緣經) at T IV 247a1 to 247a8, and T 694 (佛說大乘造像功德經) at T XVI 791b10 to 792c25; for further references cf. Anālayo 2012e: 27 note 72 and for a detailed survey of relevant texts from the Tibetan canon cf. Skilling 2008. In what follows, my discussion is based on extracts from Anālayo 2012e.

[89] SĀ 506 at T II 134a9: "he was teaching the Dharma to his mother and the *deva*s of the Thirty-three", 為母及三十三天說法.

[90] SĀ 506 at T II 134a26: "the four assemblies of Jambudvīpa wish to see the Blessed One but they do not have the supernormal power to ascend to the Heaven of the Thirty-three to pay their respects to the Blessed One. The *deva*s of the Thirty-three, [however], do themselves have the supernormal power to come down and be among human beings. We just wish for the Blessed One to come back to Jambudvīpa, out of compassion", 閻浮提四衆願見世尊, 而無神力昇三十三天禮敬世尊. 三十三天自有神力來下人中. 唯願世尊還閻浮提, 以哀愍故.

reply, the Buddha announces that in one week's time he will return, indicating the precise location where this will take place. The discourse concludes by simply reporting that the Buddha indeed returned as predicted, without going into any further details as to how this took place.

Whereas the *Saṃyukta-āgama* discourse does not describe in any detail the Buddha's descent to earth, this forms a central motif in most textual versions and artistic depictions of this tale.[91] Iconographic presentations of this episode regularly portray the Buddha's descent from the Heaven of the Thirty-three with the help of a flight of stairs, often showing three flights to convey that the descending Buddha was flanked by Brahmā and Śakra,[92] acting as his attendants.

In an aniconic portrayal of the Buddha's descent, a flight of stairs would be an obvious requirement for the whole image to work.[93] Without some visible evidence of a path or a flight of stairs it would be difficult to express the idea of a descent if the one who descends cannot be portrayed. Thus at the outset the depiction of stairs would have had a symbolic function.[94]

Soon enough, however, the stairs appear to have been taken literally. In fact some iconographic presentations show footsteps on the stairs,[95] giving the impression that the artist(s) intended to portray real stairs that the Buddha actually used to walk down. The Chinese pilgrims

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[91] Foucher 1905: 537 comments that "le fait le plus important dans l'imagination populaire n'était ni son ascension, que l'on ne voit nulle part, ni même son séjour, qui manque de pittoresque, mais bien sa 'descente' sur la terre (*avarohana*)."

[92] Allinger 2010: 3 explains that "early Indian depictions – all those preserved are reliefs – almost always show three flights of steps … in aniconic depictions the stairways are void of figures, while in iconic depictions they are occasionally replaced with a single flight."

[93] Strong 2010: 976 points out that "in an 'aniconic' context, a ladder may have simply been a convenient way of representing vertical movement, and once the tradition was established, it was kept even after the appearance of the Buddha image."

[94] Regarding the symbolism of stairs in general cf., e.g., Guénon 1962: 244–247.

[95] Cf., e.g., Coomaraswamy 1956 plate xi figure 31 middle section or Cunningham 1879 plate xvii middle section. For early representations of the same scene cf., e.g., Fábri 1930: 289, Lamotte 1958/1988: 339, Schlingloff 2000: 478f, and Skilling 2008: 42.

visiting India in fact describe the remains of the stairs that were believed to have been used by the Buddha on this occasion.[96]



Figure 4.2 The Buddha's Descent from Heaven

The scene depicts the Buddha's descent from the Heaven of the Thirty-three with the help of a flight of stairs, surrounded above, on the sides and below by a multitude of *deva*s and humans in respectful attitude.

Sāñcī stūpa, courtesy Eric R. and John C. Huntington, The Huntington Archive at The Ohio State University.

[96] Fǎxiǎn (法顯) reports that the three stairs had mostly disappeared into the ground, T 2085 at T LI 859c19, but the last seven steps were still visible, around which a monastery was constructed. Xuánzàng (玄奘) then refers to the monastery which had the triple stairs in its precincts, T 2087 at T LI 893a24.

The use of stairs also features in most textual versions of this tale. At times these textual accounts seem to struggle with the contrast between the ease with which the Buddha and Mahāmaudgalyāyana ascend to the Heaven of the Thirty-three and the circumstance that the Buddha does not use the same method on descending.[97]

The *Ekottarika-āgama* version explicitly tackles this issue, reporting Śakra's instruction that stairs should be constructed so that the Buddha does not need to employ supernormal powers to descend to Jambudvīpa.[98]

The Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinaya turns to this problem in an even more explicit manner. It reports Śakra asking the Buddha if he wishes to descend to Jambudvīpa using supernatural power or on foot.[99] The Buddha opts for going on foot, whereupon Śakra has three flights of stairs made.

The Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinaya continues with the Buddha reflecting that some non-Buddhists might misinterpret this, thinking that due to falling prey to attachment while being in the Heaven of the Thirty-three the Buddha has lost his ability to use his supernatural powers. In order to forestall such ideas, the Buddha then decides to descend halfway to Jambudvīpa using supernatural power and cover the other half of the journey on foot.[100] Evidently tradition felt that the Buddha's descent from heaven by way of stairs required an explanation.

Now the idea of employing stairs would have occurred originally when representing the Buddha's descent in art, where at least in aniconic depiction such a motif arises naturally. That is not the case for texts. The above passages make it clear that in textual accounts the motif of the stairs was felt as something of a misfit and requiring an explanation.

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[97] Strong 2010: 970 formulates the puzzling aspect of the textual accounts in this manner: "why does the Buddha … need (or appear to need) a set of stairs to come back down again to earth? Why does he not just fly or float down?"

[98] EĀ 36.5 at T II 707a28; Bareau 1997: 23 note 19 comments that "apparemment, les dieux veulent épargner au Buddha la peine de se servir de ses propres moyens surhumains. Ils veulent ainsi l'honorer et montrer qu'ils sont ses serviteurs, donc ses inférieurs."

[99] T 1451 at T XXIV 346c28 and D 6 *da* 91b1 or Q 1035 *ne* 88b4.

[100] T 1451 at T XXIV 347a10 and D 6 *da* 91b6 or Q 1035 *ne* 89a2.

This makes it highly improbable that the idea of stairs originated from a textual source. Instead, it must have originally arisen as a symbol in an aniconic context and then subsequently have been taken literally. In other words, it seems to me that we have here an instance of cross-fertilization between text and art, where an already existing tale is concretized in art and this in turn influences textual accounts.[101]

Within this gradual evolution the *Saṃyukta-āgama* discourse appears to testify to an earlier stage in the narrative development of this episode, for it shows little interest in the details of the Buddha's descent. In contrast, the record of the Buddha's sojourn in the Pāli commentarial tradition belongs to the later versions that, apparently inspired by ancient Indian art, describe in detail the stairs used by the Buddha.[102]

In agreement with its canonical parallels, the *Saṃyukta-āgama* discourse reports that the Buddha had been teaching the Dharma to his mother and the *deva*s in the Heaven of the Thirty-three. According to the *Atthasālinī*, however, the Buddha had visited his mother in the Heaven of the Thirty-three in order to teach her the Abhidharma.[103]

The *Atthasālinī* then explains the further transmission of the Abhidharma taught on this occasion as follows: the Buddha regularly came down from the Heaven of the Thirty-three to Lake Anavatapta to take his meal after having completed his almsround, and during these visits to earth he transmitted to Sāriputta the teachings he had just given in heaven. Sāriputta in turn passed these on to five hundred monk disciples of his, and in this way the transmission of the Abhidharma was ensured.[104]

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[101] For a discussion of a comparable instance in relation to the narrative and artistic depiction of the conception of the Buddha-to-be cf. Foucher 1949: 38.

[102] Dhp-a III 225,3 reports the construction of three flights of stairs, a bejewelled one in the middle for the Buddha to descend, flanked by a golden and a silver one for the celestials that attended on the Buddha during his return to earth.

[103] As 1,4 indicates that the Buddha delivered the Abhidharma while he was dwelling in the Heaven of the Thirty-three, *vasanto tidasālaye*. Tin 1976: 1 note 2 explains that *tidasa*, "thirty", is a frequent substitution in verse for *tāvatiṃsa*; cf. also Haldar 1977: 24.

[104] As 16,17+35. Davidson 1990/1992: 304 explains that "the Theravādas adapted an old story about the Tathāgata travelling to the Trayastriṃśa heaven during a rains retreat to preach the dharma to his mother … as a basis for identifying the first teaching of

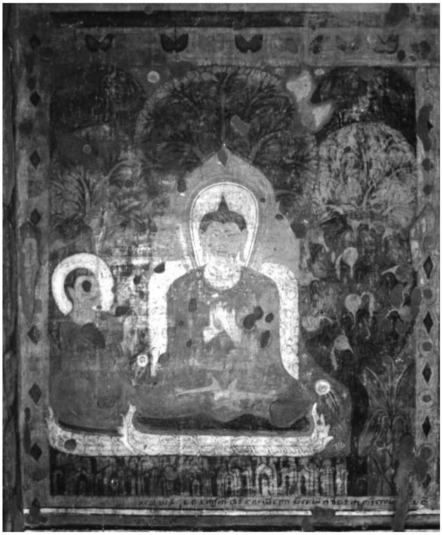


Figure 4.3 The Transmission of the Abhidhamma to Sāriputta

According to the inscription that accompanies the painting, the scene depicts the Buddha teaching the Abhidhamma to Sāriputta, passing on to his chief disciple what he had just taught to the *deva*s in the Heaven of the Thirty-three.

Pagan, courtesy Lilian Handlin.

That the Buddha taught the Abhidharma to his mother during his stay in the Heaven of the Thirty-three seems to be an idea found only in the Theravāda tradition.[105] This brings to mind the case of the *Lomasakaṅgiyabhaddekaratta*-*sutta*, where again only the Theravāda discourse locates the Buddha's delivery of a poem and its explanation in the Heaven

their *Abhidhamma-piṭaka*. There was still the problem of the manner of its transmission to one of the śrāvakas, since Mahāmāyā had remained in heaven." This was solved through the tale that during his sojourn in Trayastriṃśa the Buddha came regularly down to earth, "where he taught the entire *Abhidhamma* to Sāriputta."

105 Skilling 2008: 51 comments that "no other Buddhist school chose to locate the teaching of the *Abhidharma* in the Trayastriṃśa abode … there was no suggestion that the *Abhidharma* was taught anywhere but in Jambudvīpa."

of the Thirty-three. According to the Theravāda commentaries, the Buddha spoke this poem during the same sojourn in the Heaven of the Thirty-three when he also delivered the Abhidharma.[106]

A problem with the Theravāda notion that the Buddha taught the Abhidharma to his mother during his stay in the Heaven of the Thirty-three is that the Pāli discourses report that his mother had been reborn in Tuṣita Heaven, not in the Heaven of the Thirty-three.[107] According to early Buddhist cosmology, the *deva*s of the Tuṣita realm are long-lived and even a short fraction of time spent in Tuṣita Heaven equals a long time period on earth.[108]

Thus it would not be possible to assume that behind this inconsistency stands the idea that the bodhisattva's mother arose first in Tuṣita and then, still during the lifetime of the Buddha, passed away from there to arise in the Heaven of the Thirty-three. Once she was living in Tuṣita at the time the Buddha decided to visit her, however, it would certainly have been more natural for him to be depicted as going di-

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[106] The commentarial tradition seems to consider both teachings to have taken place during the same sojourn in the Heaven of the Thirty-three in the seventh year after the Buddha's awakening: the commentary on the *Lomasakaṅgiyabhaddekaratta-sutta*, Ps V 7,8, explains that the Buddha gave this teaching in the Heaven of the Thirty-three in the seventh year after his awakening. Regarding the teaching of the Abhidharma to his mother, Sv I 57,5 indicates that the Buddha performed the twin miracle at Sāvatthī in the seventh year after his awakening, and according to Dhp-a III 216,13 it was after the performance of the twin miracle at Sāvatthī that the Buddha decided to spend the ensuing rains retreat in the Heaven of the Thirty-three. According to Mochizuki 1940: 35, a range of different sources agree that the Buddha spent his seventh rains retreat in this celestial realm.

[107] MN 123 at MN III 122,2 and Ud 5.2 at Ud 48,6; this problem has already been noted by Bareau 1974: 209.

[108] AN 3.70 at AN I 214,3 and its parallels MĀ 202 at T I 772c9, T 87 at T I 911c27, and SĀ 861 at T II 219b5 indicate that the lifespan of beings in the Tuṣita realm lasts for 4000 years, and a single day in this Tuṣita type of year corresponds to 400 years on earth, a relationship described similarly in the *Āyuḥparyanta-sūtra*, Matsumura 1989: 80,25 (Skt.) and 94,29 (Tib.), with the Chinese version in T 759 at T XVII 602c14. Thus, from the viewpoint of tradition, by the time of the Buddha's visit to the Heaven of the Thirty-three only a tiny fraction of a single day in Tuṣita had passed since Māyā had been reborn there.

rectly to that realm to give her teachings, instead of going to the Heaven of the Thirty-three.

The *Mahāpadāna-sutta* of the Theravāda tradition indicates that it is a rule that the mother of a Buddha arises in Tuṣita after she dies. According to its Sanskrit counterpart, however, the mother of a Buddha will rather be reborn in the Heaven of the Thirty-three.[109] The *Lalitavistara* similarly indicates that the mother of Gautama Buddha was reborn in the Heaven of the Thirty-three.[110] Thus the problem with the Buddha's visit to his mother in the Heaven of the Thirty-three, although she had not been reborn in this realm, applies mainly to the Theravāda tradition.

The *Atthasālinī*'s attempt to authenticate the Abhidharma by presenting it as a teaching delivered by the Buddha to his mother may have been inspired by an Indian tradition according to which the Buddha's mother had been reborn in the Heaven of the Thirty-three.[111] Otherwise there would be little reason for the *Atthasālinī* to locate the Buddha's mother in a realm where, according to the discourses of the Theravāda tradition, she had not been reborn. In other words, the tale of the Buddha's teaching of the Abhidharma to his mother in the Heaven of the Thirty-three appears to be a maladroit adaptation of an Indian tale to the needs of the Theravādins to authenticate their Abhidharma collection.[112]

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[109] DN 14 at DN II 14,4 and Waldschmidt 1956: 113,9 (§6c.1).

[110] Lefmann 1902: 98,4.

[111] According to Mhv 37.225, Buddhaghosa wrote the *Atthasālinī* while he was still in India, before going to Sri Lanka; cf. also Rhys Davids 1900/1922: xxvii, Malalasekera 1928/1994: 98, Bechert 1955: 355, Law 1973: 407, and Norman 1978: 42. Pind 1992: 136f, however, argues against attributing the *Atthasālinī* to Buddhaghosa; cf. also von Hinüber 1996/1997: 151. For a critical review of arguments raised by Bapat and Vadekar 1942: xxxiii–xxxix against identifying Buddhaghosa as the author of the *Atthasālinī* cf. Hayashi 1999.

[112] Rhys Davids 1908: 19 comments that the "legend … that the Abhidhamma was first uttered by the Buddha in the Tāvatimsa heaven … is not consonant with the Buddhist standpoint, that such an audience should be held capable of benefitting by disquisitions on philosophical problems which had been withheld from the stronger intellects of the … disciples, whom he instructs in the Suttanta. In fact, the legend sprang probably from the orthodox anxiety to invest with a sanction, not inferior to that of the two earlier *piṭakas*, a series of compilations which are manifestly of later date, and

Whatever its historical origins, the proposal that the Abhidharma was originally taught in the Heaven of the Thirty-three has become the accepted lore of the Theravāda tradition. This form of presentation quite vividly invests the Abhidharma with a celestial seal of approval and enhances the Abhidharma as something superior to other canonical teachings, which for the most part are delivered on earth.

Another significant aspect of the story of this sojourn by the Buddha in a heavenly realm is that it shows him fulfilling his filial duty by teaching his mother the Abhidharma.[113] In this way, he fulfilled his filial duty not merely by giving her an ordinary discourse, but by initiating her into the superior doctrine of the Abhidharma. This then established her in the fruit of stream-entry.[114]

The notion that the Buddha's teaching of the Abhidharma led his mother to attain stream-entry brings me back to the topic explored at the outset of this chapter, the supramundane path. From the *Mahācattārīsaka-sutta* to the commentarial tale of the Buddha's stay in the Heaven of the Thirty-three, the relationship between the Abhidharma and awak-

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the work of elaborating scholiasts." Cf. also, e.g., Foucher 1949: 275, Reynolds and Reynolds 1982: 18, Buswell and Jaini 1996: 80, and Salomon 2011: 167.

113 Needless to say, filial piety was an issue of considerable importance already in the Indian setting; cf. Schopen 1984/1997 for epigraphic evidence and Strong 1983 as well as Guang Xing 2005 for a study of relevant textual sources. Hence this motif need not be seen as reflecting the influence of Chinese thought on the tale, pace Faure 1998: 24, who reasons that "the apparent lack of filial piety of the Buddha raised serious issues. In response to this criticism, Chinese Buddhists worked hard to assert a typically Buddhist form of filial piety: the Buddha even went to heaven, we are told, to preach the Dharma to his mother."

114 Dhp-a III 222,6 indicates that the delivery of the Abhidharma teachings was especially meant for his mother, thereby establishing her in the attainment of stream-entry, Dhp-a III 223,17. According to Dhp-a III 216,15, this is a pattern followed by all Buddhas, i.e., they all ascend to heaven to teach the Abhidharma to their mothers. Ohnuma 2012: 125 highlights that only her stream-entry, but not her final attainment of Nirvāṇa is recorded, in contrast to the case of Mahāprajāpatī. In view of the time relation that according to tradition obtains between human life and this particular heaven (see above note 108) this need not have any deeper significance, but could simply reflect the difference between progress from stream-entry to full awakening when being a *deva* in Tuṣita in contrast to being a human being who has gone forth.

ening appears to provide a continuous theme. The concerns behind these presentations clearly stand in close relation to the essence of the whole teaching, the experience of awakening.

Instead of merely serving as a raft to be left behind once one has crossed over,[115] however, the teachings on the path to awakening have given rise to analysis undertaken for its own sake, a trajectory that has led to the conceit of superiority and the need for authentication.

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115 The simile of the raft can be found in MN 22 at MN I 134,30 and its parallels MĀ 200 at T I 764b19, EĀ 43.5 at T II 760a13, a discourse quotation in the *Abhidharma-kośopāyikā-ṭīkā*, D 4094 *nyu* 74b6 or Q 5595 *thu* 119b7, and a quotation in T 1509 (大智度論) at T XXV 63c7; cf. Lamotte 1944/1981: 64.

Conclusion

Approaching the evolution of the Abhidharma from the viewpoint of the early discourses puts into perspective the relationship between early canonical Abhidharma works and specific discourses. When considered from the viewpoint of the canonical Abhidharma collections, the fact that the *Saṅgītiparyāya* is a commentary on the *Saṅgīti-sūtra* makes it only natural that this discourse has been considered as being in some way proto-Abhidharma. Once the *Saṅgīti-sūtra* is examined within the context of other early discourses, however, this impression requires some qualification. The fact that a commentary on the *Saṅgīti-sūtra* has become a canonical Abhidharma work does not turn the *Saṅgīti-sūtra* itself automatically into proto-Abhidharma. If this were the case, other discourses quoted in the *Dharmaskandha*, **Śāriputrābhidharma*, or *Vibhaṅga* would also have to be considered proto-Abhidharma, even the first sermon by the Buddha, just because it is quoted in the *Dharmaskandha*.

The relationship of the *Saṅgīti-sūtra* to the *Saṅgītiparyāya* can rather be seen to put a spotlight on the essentially commentarial nature of early Abhidharma texts. What became the higher doctrine, considered by tradition to be more profound and superior compared to the expositions given in the discourses, appears to have had its humble beginnings as commentaries on these discourses. Such commentaries in the course of time would have become increasingly independent from the texts on which they commented. In this way what originally was merely "about", *abhi*-, the Dharma, eventually turned into the "superior" or "higher" Dharma, the Abhidharma.

The canonical works that enshrine the Abhidharma clearly reflect the important influence of *mātṛkā*s in the form of summary listings and the recurrent use of question-and-answer catechisms. Without in any way intending to deny the formative influence of these central structural elements, when considered within the broader framework of Buddhist lit-

erature in general, or even non-Buddhist literature, it becomes clear that summary listings and the question-and-answer format cannot be considered as being themselves an expression of Abhidharma influence. Instead, these are simply tools of oral (and written) transmission that can occur in various types of texts that may bear no relationship whatsoever to the Abhidharma. The *mātṛkā* par excellence, the *prātimokṣa*, is certainly not Abhidharma.

The topic-wise and numerical arrangements of collections like the *Saṃyukta-āgama/Saṃyutta-nikāya* and the *Ekottarika-āgama/Aṅguttara-nikāya* are a natural organizing structure for orally transmitted material and not the outcome of Abhidharma influence. The same holds for the employment of analysis, which does not automatically turn the text in question into Abhidharma; nor do discourses and chapters in canonical collections that carry the name *vibhaṅga* in their title necessarily reflect the influence of Abhidharma. Such texts may just as well pertain to the Vinaya or else be discourses that do not show any evident sign of the impact of Abhidharma thought.

Instead of conceiving the evolution of the Abhidharma entirely in terms of such formal aspects, the dawn of the Abhidharma can be seen to have taken its main inspiration from a shift in perspective. Central here is the attempt to be as comprehensive as possible, to supplement the directives given in the early discourses for progress on the path with a full picture of all aspects of the path in an attempt to provide a complete map of everything in some way related to the path.

This drive towards all-inclusive coverage mirrors the notion of the Buddha's omniscient knowledge. The sense of comprehensiveness that marks the Buddha's attainment of omniscience finds its expression in the comprehensive exposition of his wisdom in Abhidharma works. Equipped with a complete map of the doctrine, the disciples are fortified in their struggle for survival in competition with non-Buddhist teachers and groups and in their attempts to maintain harmony within the Buddhist fold. The completeness of the map ensures that, even though the teacher is no longer available for personal guidance and advice, all the information required for progress on the path is readily available.

In this way, the elevation of the Buddha to the position of an omniscient teacher and the mapping of the doctrine in the Abhidharma appear to be interdependent processes. Both to some degree respond to the emotional need of the disciples at a time when the teacher had passed away. Both also bring the teachings more in line with contemporary ideas and notions in ancient India. Both in this way provide the raw material for the construction of a sense of institutional identity, something that becomes more clearly evident in the period that sets in after the initial development that I have attempted to trace in this study.

Within the context of analytical expositions, the drive towards a comprehensive coverage of all that there is makes itself clearly felt in the tendency to doctrinal and textual proliferation. The variations between the parallel versions of the *Saṅgīti-sūtra* clearly reflect the tendency to proliferate by adding items. Yet, just as in the case of the *Bahudhātuka-sūtra*, such proliferation still employs as its building blocks material found elsewhere in the early discourses. This in a way exemplifies the beginnings of a tendency more clearly evident in the early Abhidharma of attempting to combine different teachings into a unified coherent whole.

In the case of the detailed analyses of the four noble truths and of the absorptions in the *Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna-sutta* and the *Anupada-sutta*, the tendency to proliferate for the sake of a comprehensive coverage emerges with increased clarity and begins to employ formulations and terms not found elsewhere in the early discourses. Here the Abhidharma begins to emerge as something of its own, evident in the use of specific terminology and expressions. So these two discourses could perhaps be considered as the first twilight of the dawn of Abhidharma. Aspects of this twilight are the *Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna-sutta*'s coverage of the second and third noble truths by breaking down craving into a multitude of minor aspects, and the *Anupada-sutta*'s complementary drive towards comprehensive coverage by listing all mental factors that could be found in a particular absorption.

The attempt to give a complete list of all dharmas relevant to the precise definition of a particular event naturally tends to focus on a single instant, instead of trying to cover a whole process. It is already a rather

demanding task to provide a complete map of the building blocks of what happens at one moment. It would be considerably more difficult to do so for a process changing over a prolonged time period. In this way, a focus on momentary events is a natural outcome of trying to provide a complete coverage.

The *Mahācattārīsaka-sutta* shows a more mature stage of beginning Abhidharma thought in its focus on a momentary event. In terms of the dawn of the Abhidharma, with this discourse the sun has begun to rise in the sky. The rays of light that shine forth in this way are not just the outcome of dry scholastic speculation, but rather serve to illuminate the most crucial concern of early Buddhist practice, awakening as the culmination of the path. The conception of a supramundane path is similarly reflected in the *Dīrgha-āgama* and the *Saṃyukta-āgama*, showing that the arising of this idea was not limited to a particular school, nor related to a specific discourse collection. The rather substantial contribution to Buddhist thought that appears in these discourses involves a shift from process to event, from concern with an ongoing process to focus on a momentary instant. Here we find not only new terminology, but also the appearance of new ideas.

For the dawn of the Abhidharma the notion of the supramundane path, evident in the *Mahācattārīsaka-sutta* and the discourses from the *Dīrgha-āgama* and the *Saṃyukta-āgama*, is of considerable importance. Its importance is comparable to the notion that the bodhisattva Gautama already at birth is supreme in the world and that in a former life he decided to embark on the quest for Buddhahood, evident in the *Acchariyabbhutadhamma-sutta* and its *Madhyama-āgama* parallel, discussed in my study of *The Genesis of the Bodhisattva Ideal*.

The gradual apotheosis of the Buddha, leading to the emergence of the bodhisattva ideal, is also evident in the notion of his omniscience, which in turn mirrors the Abhidharma's drive for comprehensiveness. In this way, not only the first refuge (the Buddha), but also the second refuge (his teaching) evolved in a manner that effectively filled the vacuum created by the demise of the teacher, fortifying the disciples in their competition with non-Buddhist practitioners.

The Theravāda tale of the Buddha's sojourn in the Heaven of the Thirty-three teaching his mother the Abhidharma, born out of a need to provide authentication to the Abhidharma as an independent set of scriptures, vividly expresses how the superiority of the Buddha informs the supremacy of the Abhidharma.

So what, in sum, does the "Abhidharma" stand for? Clearly Abhidharma is not just to be found in the use of dry lists or summaries. Instead, born out of what originally was a commentary on the Dharma, Abhidharma has gone "further", *abhi*-, than the Dharma, something that is evident in the employment of new terminology and ideas. Arisen from the wish to clarify the teachings of the recently deceased Buddha, what is characteristic of the Abhidharma is a conception of wisdom that aims at a complete coverage by surveying all the constituents of a single moment in their interrelation, instead of merely monitoring a process of disenchantment, dispassion, and seeing as it really is.

Abbreviations

AN	*Aṅguttara-nikāya*
As	*Atthasālinī*
B^{e}	Burmese edition
C^{e}	Ceylonese edition
D	Derge edition
DĀ	*Dirgha-āgama* (T 1)
Dhātuk	*Dhātukathā*
Dhp	*Dhammapada*
Dhp-a	*Dhammapada-aṭṭhakathā*
Dhs	*Dhammasaṅgaṇī*
DN	*Dīgha-nikāya*
EĀ	*Ekottarika-āgama* (T 125)
E^{e}	PTS edition
It	*Itivuttaka*
Jā	*Jātaka*
Kv	*Kathāvatthu*
Kv-a	*Kathāvatthu-aṭṭhakathā*
MĀ	*Madhyama-āgama* (T 26)
Mhv	*Mahāvaṃsa*
Mil	*Milindapañha*
MN	*Majjhima-nikāya*
Mp	*Manorathapūraṇī*
Nett	*Nettipakaraṇa*
Nidd I	*Mahāniddesa*
Paṭis	*Paṭisambhidāmagga*
Paṭis-a	*Saddhammappakāsinī*
Pj II	*Paramatthajotikā*
Ps	*Papañcasūdanī*
Q	Peking edition
SĀ	*Saṃyukta-āgama* (T 99)
SĀ^{2}	*Saṃyukta-āgama* (T 100)
S^{e}	Siamese edition

SN	*Saṃyutta-nikāya*
Sn	*Sutta-nipāta*
Sp	*Samantapāsādikā*
Sv	*Sumaṅgalavilāsinī*
T	Taishō edition
Th	*Theragāthā*
Ud	*Udāna*
Ud-a	*Paramatthadīpanī*
Uv	*Udānavarga*
Vibh	*Vibhaṅga*
Vibh-a	*Sammohavinodanī*
Vin	*Vinaya*
Vism	*Visuddhimagga*

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